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OUR LORD'S LIFE ON EARTH.

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OUR LORD'S

LIFE ON EARTH

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM HANNA, D.D. LL.D.

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VOL. II.

MINISTRY IN GALILEE

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I.

THE TWO HEALINGS—THE LEPER AND THE PARALYTIC.[1]

IN describing our Lord's first circuit through Galilee, the Evangelist tells us that "they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them."[2] How many and how varied were the cures effected within the course of this first itineracy of our Lord can only be conceived by remembering how numerous were the towns and villages through which He passed, and how large the population with which, one way or other, He was brought into contact.[3] Remembering this, we may believe that within a

[1] Matt. viii. 2-4; Mark i. 40-45, ii. 1-12; Luke v. 12-26.
[2] Matt. iv. 24.
[3] *Earlier Years*, p. 418.

week or two after his first departure from Capernaum more healings were effected than the whole put together, of which any specific record has been preserved in the Four Gospels.

There was one form of disease, however, which is not noticed in St. Matthew's compendious description—a disease peculiar enough in its own character, but to which an additional peculiarity attached from the manner in which it was dealt with by the Mosaic law. However infectious, however deadly, however incurable, no disease but one was held to render its victim ceremonially unclean. Such uncleanness was stamped by the law upon the leper alone. This strange, creeping, spreading, loathsome, fatal disease appears to have been selected as the one form of bodily affliction to stand, in the legal impurity attached to it, and in the penalties visited on that impurity, as a type of the deep, inward, pervading, corrupting, destroying malady of sin.

Among the Jews the leper was excommunicated. Cut off from the congregation of the people, he had to live apart, enjoying only such society as those afflicted with the same disease

could offer. He had to bear upon his person the emblems of sorrow and of death; had to wear the rent garments which those wore who were weeping for the dead; to shave his head and keep it bare as those must do who had touched the dead —himself the living dead, for whom those emblems of mourning needed to be assumed. His face half covered, he had to go about crying, "Unclean, unclean," to warn all others off, lest they should come too near to him.

From what we know of the prevalence of this disease, it may be believed that there were many lepers in Galilee when our Lord made his first journey through it—gathered here and there into small and miserable communities. Even among these the tidings of the wonderful cures that were being effected would circulate, for the segregation was not so complete as to prevent all intercourse; and when these poor exiles from their fellows heard of many being healed whose complaints were as much beyond all human remedy as theirs, the hope might spring up in their hearts that the Great Healer's powers extended even to their case. But which of them had faith enough to make the

trial—to break through the legal fences imposed, and go into any of the cities in which Jesus was, and throw himself upon his sympathy for succour? One such there was—the first of those so afflicted who ventured to approach the Lord; and his case on that account was selected for special record by all the three Evangelists. He came to Jesus "when he was in a certain city."[1] He had never seen the Lord before, or seen him only at a distance, among a crowd. He could have known or heard but little more about him than what the voice of rumour had proclaimed. Yet so soon as he recognises him, see with what reverence he kneels and worships and falls on his face before him,[2] and hear how he salutes and pleads, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Perhaps Jesus had never seen a man prostrate himself in his presence as this man did. Certainly, Jesus was never before addressed in words so few and simple, yet so full of reverence, earnestness, faith, submission. He called Jesus

[1] Had the name of that city been given it might have helped to trace the course that Jesus was taking, but here, as in many other instances, the means of identification are denied.

[2] Luke v. 12.

LORD. Was this the first time that Jesus had been so addressed? Sir, Rabbi, Master—these were the terms in which Andrew, and Nathanael, and Nicodemus, and the woman of Samaria, and the nobleman of Capernaum, had addressed him. None of them had spoken to him as this leper did. If, indeed, the miraculous draught of fishes by which Peter had been finally summoned away from his old occupation had already occurred, then it would be from his lips that this title was first heard coming, when he fell down at Jesus' feet exclaiming, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." That, however, is uncertain; but though it were true, how much had Simon to elevate his conception of Christ's character,—how little this leper! One wonders, indeed, how far he had got in his idea of who this Jesus—this healer of diseases—was. All that we can know is that he chose the highest title that he knew of, and bestowed it on him. "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst." No hesitation as to the power; no presumption or dictation as to the will. Upon that free will, upon that almighty power, he casts himself. "Lord, if thou wilt,

thou canst make me clean." Jesus instantly went forward—went close to him—put forth his hand and touched him. His disciples hold back; a strange shuddering sensation passes through the hearts of the onlookers, for, by the law of Moses, it was forbidden to touch a leper. He who touched a leper himself became unclean. Yet at once, without hesitation at the time—without acting afterwards as if he had contracted any defilement or required any purification—Jesus lays his hand upon one who was "full of leprosy," and he says to him, "I will, be thou clean." We lose a little of the power and majesty of our Saviour's answer in our translation. Two words were spoken (*Θέλω, καθαρίσθητι*), the answer, the echo to the prayer; two of the very words the man had used taken up and employed by Jesus in framing his prompt and gracious reply. No petition that was ever presented to Jesus met with a quicker, more complete, more satisfactory response. If our Lord's conduct in this instance was regulated by the principle which we know so often guided it in the treatment he gave to those who came to him to be cured, great must have

been the faith which was met in such a way. The readiness which Jesus had displayed to exert his power may partly have been due to this being the first case of a leper's application to him, and to his desire to show that no legal barrier would be allowed by him to stand in the way of his stretching forth his hand to heal all that were diseased. Yet, the manner and the speech of the leper himself attest that he approached with no ordinary reverence, and petitioned with no ordinary faith. And, according to his faith, it was done unto him immediately. As soon as the words "I will, be thou clean," had come from the Saviour's lips, "the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed."

Did any further colloquy take place between the healed and the Healer? When, quick as lightning, through the frame the sensation passed of an entirely recovered health—when he stood up before the Lord, not a sign or symptom of the banished leprosy on his person—did no thanks burst from his grateful lips? or did our Lord say nothing to him about another healing which he was both willing and able to effect? We are not

to infer that nothing of the kind occurred because nothing is recorded. The Evangelists have preserved alone the fact that, whatever words may have passed between them, Jesus was in haste to send the leper away, and in doing so gave him strict command to tell no man, but to go instantly and show himself to the priest, and offer the gifts that Moses commanded—the live birds and the cedar wood, and the scarlet and hyssop,—the means and instruments by which the purification of one declared free of leprosy was to be effected, and, relieved from the ban that had been laid upon him, he was to be reinstated in the possession of all the common privileges of society and citizenship. It is quite possible that, knowing the opposition which was already kindling against him, of which we shall presently see traces, Jesus may have desired that, without throwing out any hint of what had occurred which might precede him by the way and prejudice the judge, this man should repair as quickly as possible to the priest upon whom it devolved judicially to declare that he, so recently a man full of leprosy, was now entirely free of the complaint. It would be

a testimony they could not well gainsay, if the fact of the departure of the leprosy were attested by the acceptance of the offerer's gifts and his re-admission into the congregation of Israel. To prevent any possibility of this ratification of the reality of the cure being refused, Jesus might have enjoined silence and as speedy a resort as possible to the priest; the silence in such circumstances and with such a view prescribed, to last only till the desired end was gained. It would seem, however, from the result, that a more immediate object of the Saviour in laying this injunction upon the leper was to prevent the influx of a still greater crowd than that which was already oppressing him, and thus the hampering of his movements, and the absorption of too much of his time in the mere work of healing. For straightway, though charged to keep silence, the man when he went from Jesus could not restrain himself, but "began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that great multitudes came together to be healed of their infirmities, and Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert

places, and withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed."[1]

Again, a second time, as it was after that busy Sabbath in Capernaum, and before his first journey through Galilee, so now, at the close of this circuit and under the pressure of the multitude that beset his path, Jesus is driven forth from the city's crowded haunts to seek the solitary place, where for some hours at least he may enjoy unbroken communion with Heaven. To watch how and when it was that he took refuge thus in prayer, mingling devotion with activity, the days of bustle with the hours of quiet, intercourse with man in fellowship with God, let this be one of our cherished employments, following the earthly footsteps of our Lord: for nothing is more fitted to impress upon us the lesson,—how needful, how serviceable it is, if we would walk and work rightly among or for others around us, that we be often alone with our Father which is in heaven. A life all action will be as bad for our own soul as a life all prayer would be profitless for others. It is the right and happy blending, each in its due proportion, of stillness and of action, of work

[1] Mark i. 45; Luke v. 15, 16.

and prayer, which promotes true spiritual health and growth; and the weaker we are—the more easily at once distracted and absorbed by much bustling activity—so much the more of reflection, retirement, and devotion is needed to temper our spirit aright, and to keep it in harmony with that of our Lord and Master.

It is as impossible to tell how long a time it took to make the first round of the Galilean towns and villages, as it is to define the line or circle along which Jesus moved. One high authority[1] concludes that it must have occupied between two and three months: another,[2] that it did not occupy more than four or five days. A period of intermediate length would probably be nearer the truth than either. On completing the circuit he returned to Capernaum, to take up his abode again in Peter's house. No rest was given him. The news of his return passed rapidly through the town, and straightway so many were gathered together "that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door." We must remember here, in order to understand what followed, the form of a Jewish house, and the mate-

[1] Greswell. [2] Ellicott.

rials of which its roof was ordinarily composed. There is not now, and there never seems to have been, much variety in the shape of a Syrian dwelling-house. Externally they all present the one dull uniform appearance of so many cubes or squares, seldom more than one storey high—the outer walls showing no windows, nor any opening on the level of the ground except the door. On entering you pass through a lesser court, into which alone strangers are admitted, and then into the inner uncovered square into which the different apartments of the building open. In one corner, either of the outer or inner court—generally in the latter—there is a flight of steps conducting to the roof, a place of frequent resort at all times, and in the hotter months of summer turned into the sleeping-place of the household. The larger houses, in which the wealthier inhabitants reside, are all separate from one another. The lesser are often without any open court-yard, and built close together, so that you could pass readily from roof to roof. These roofs, always flat, are formed of bricks or tiles, or more generally of a compost of mud and straw, which a

day's such rain as we often have would entirely demolish. Whatever the size of the houses be, or however they be situated relatively to each other, in one way or other, either by a staircase within the court—open, of course, only to the family to which the house belongs—or by a flight of steps without—which, when the houses are contiguous, may serve many households as a common means of access—the roof of each dwelling is easily reached. We do not need to settle what size the dwelling was in Capernaum where Jesus took up his abode; we have only to imagine it to be of the usual and invariable Syrian type, to render the narrative intelligible.

A crowd assembles and fills the room of the house in which Jesus sits and teaches. At first this crowd is not so dense but that a single individual may pass through it, and in this way one and another of the diseased did press through, and the power of the Lord was there to heal them. But the crowd grew and thickened, it overflowed the room, it filled the street before the door, till every spot within reach of Christ's voice was occupied, and still there were new comers press-

ing in to try and catch a word; and to the work of healing within an effectual stop seems now to to have been put. At this stage four men appear, bearing a sick man on a litter. They reach the crowd, they try to enter, they entreat, they expostulate; the thing is hopeless, that four men with such a burden ever shall get through. Is the project to be given up, the great chance lost? The bearers consult the man they carry. He is paralytic, cannot move a limb, can do nothing for himself. But he is in full possession of his faculties, the spirit is entire within. It was his eagerness to be healed, still more than their readiness to help him, that had led these four men to lift him and carry him so far, and they are ready still to do anything—anything they can. Some one suggests—who so likely as the paralytic himself?—that they might get upon the roof, lift up so much of it as was required, and let down before Christ the bed on which the patient lay; a singular, an extreme step to take, yet one to which men who were resolved to do anything rather than lose the opportunity, might not refuse to have recourse.

They all were strong in the belief that if only they could get at Jesus the cure would be effected, but the paralytic himself had an eager craving to get into the Saviour's presence, deeper than that springing from the desire to have his bodily ailment removed. The stroke that had taken the strength out of his body had quickened conscience. He had recognised it as coming from the hand of God—it had awakened within him a sense of his great and manifold bygone transgressions. His sins had taken hold of him, and the burden was too heavy for him to bear. He hears of Jesus that he had announced himself as the healer of the broken-hearted; that there is a Gospel, good tidings that he proclaims to the poor in spirit. If ever a heart needed healing, a spirit needed comforting, it is his. And now, shall he be so near to him whom he has been so anxious to see, and yet have to go away disappointed, unrelieved? He either himself suggests, or, when suggested, he warmly approves, the project of trying to let him down through the roof. The bearers second his desires. They make the effort —they succeed: noiselessly they lift the tiles—

gently they let down the bed, and before Jesus, as he is speaking, the bed and its burden lie.

But now, before noticing how Jesus met this interruption of his discourse, and dealt with the man who was so curiously obtruded on his notice, let us look around a moment on the strangely constituted audience which Christ at this moment is addressing. Close beside him are his disciples —around him are many simple-minded, simple-hearted men, drinking in with wonder words they scarce half understand. But they are not all friendly listeners who are there, for there are "Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by," some from Galilee, some from Judæa, some even from Jerusalem. The last—what has brought them here? They come as spies—they come as emissaries from the men who reproved Jesus at Jerusalem for his healing of another paralytic at the pool of Bethesda, on the Sabbath day, and who sought to slay him, "because he had not only broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God." Already these Pharisees counted Jesus a blasphemer, whose life they were seeking but the fit

ground and occasion to cut off. And here are some of their number wearing the mask, waiting and watching, little knowing all the while that an eye is on them which follows every turn of their thoughts, and sees into all the secret places of their hearts. It is as one who thus thoroughly knew them, and would with his own hand throw a fresh stone of stumbling before their feet—as one who thoroughly knew also the poor, helpless, palsied penitent, who lies on the bed before him, that Jesus now speaks and acts. Meeting those pleading eyes that are fixed so importunately upon him, without making any inquiries or waiting to have any petition presented, "Son," he says to the sick of the palsy, "be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." He would not have addressed him thus had he not known how greatly he needed to be cheered, how gladly he would welcome the pardon, in what a suitable condition he was to have that pardon bestowed. Let us believe then that, spoken with nicest adaptation to the man's state and wants, Christ's words were with power—that as quickly and as thoroughly as the words, "I will, be thou clean," banished the

leprosy from the one man's body, as quickly and as thoroughly these words banished the gloom and despondency from this man's soul. Thus spoken to by one in whom he had full confidence, he was of good cheer, and did assuredly believe that his sins had been forgiven him. If it was so—if his faith in Jesus as his soul's deliverer was as simple and as strong as, from the way in which Christ spoke, we presume it was—then too happy would he be at the moment when the blessedness of him whose sins are forgiven, whose iniquity is covered, filled his heart, to think of anything beside. He is silent at least, he is satisfied, he makes no remonstrance, he proffers no request. There is nothing going on within his breast that Jesus needs to drag forth to light, to detect and to rebuke. Not so with the Scribes and Pharisees, upon whom those words of Jesus have had a quite startling effect. They, too, are silent; nor, beyond the glances of wonder, horror, hate, that they hastily and furtively exchange, do they give any outward sign of what is passing in their hearts. But Jesus knows it all. They had been saying within themselves, "This man blasphemeth;" they

had been reasoning in their hearts, to their own entire satisfaction and to Christ's utter condemnation, saying, "Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?" Notwithstanding all their self-assurance, they must have been a little startled when, the thoughts of their hearts revealed, Jesus said to them, "Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?" He does not ask which was easier, to forgive sins or to cure a palsy, but which was easier, to say the one or to say the other, for he knew that they had been secretly thinking how easy it was for any man to say to another, Thy sins be forgiven thee, but how impossible it was for him to make good such a saying. "But that ye may know," he added, "that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then saith he to the sick of the palsy), Arise and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house." The man arose and departed to his own house—healed in body, healed in spirit—glorifying God. The people saw it, and were amazed, and were filled

with awe; and they said to one another, "We never saw it in this fashion—we have seen strange things to-day." And "they glorified God which had given such power to men." The Scribes and Pharisees saw it, and had palpable evidence of the superhuman knowledge and superhuman power of Christ given to them—had a miracle wrought before their eyes in proof of Christ's possession of a prerogative which they were right in thinking belonged to God only, but they would not let anything convince them that the Son of Man had power on earth to forgive sins; and it was not long, as we shall see, ere new stumbling-blocks were thrown in their way, over which they fell.

Our Saviour, in bodily presence, has now passed away from us. He can touch us no more with his living finger; he banishes no more our bodily diseases with a word; but the leprosy of the heart—the spreading, pervading taints of ungodliness, selfishness, malignity, impurity—these it is his office still to cure; these it is our duty still to carry to him to have removed; and if we go in the spirit of him who said, Lord, if thou wilt,

thou canst make me clean, the cleansing virtue will not be withheld.

The Son of Man had power on earth to forgive sins; he exercised that power; he absolved at once the penitent of Capernaum from all his sins; he caused that man to taste the joy of an immediate, gracious, free, and full forgiveness. What is to hinder our receiving the same benefit—enjoying the same blessing? Has the Son of Man lost any of his power to forgive sins by his being no more upon this earth, his having passed into the heavens? Is pardon a boon that he no longer dispenses, that he holds now suspended over our heads—a thing to be hoped for but never to be had? No, let us believe that his mission on earth has not so failed in its great object; that he is as willing as he is able to say and do for each of us what he said and did for the palsied man in Peter's house at Capernaum; that he waits but to see us penitent and broken-hearted, looking to and trusting in him, to say in turn to each of us, "Son—Daughter—be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee."

II.

THE CHARGE OF SABBATH-BREAKING.[1]

It was a common saying among the Jews, that whoever did any work on the Sabbath day, denied the work of the creation. The saying was grounded on the fact that one principal end of the Sabbatic institute was, by its continued and faithful observance, to preserve a knowledge of, and a faith in, the one Living and True God as the Creator of all things. As being a most explicit and expressive embodiment in outward act and habit of the faith of the Jewish people, that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and the sea and all that in them is, it was chosen by God as a fit and appropriate sign of the peculiar relationship towards Him into which that people had been brought—the peculiar standing which among

[1] Mark i. 1-31; John v. 1-47; Matt. xii. 1-14; John ix. 14; Luke xiii. 10-17; xiv. 1-6.

other nations it was to occupy. "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy man-servant and thy maid-servant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched-out arm: therefore, the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day."[1] "Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever."[2] "Moreover also I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them. Hallow my Sabbaths; that ye may know that I am the Lord your God."[3]

[1] Deut. v. 13-15.
[2] Exod. xxxi. 16, 17.
[3] Ezek. xx. 12, 20.

There was no rite, nor institution, not even circumcision, by which the Jews were more conspicuously distinguished from surrounding nations, and marked off as the worshippers of Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth. Their Sabbath-keeping was a perpetual and visible token of the connexion in which they stood to God, and of the great mission which, under him, they were set apart to discharge. But how was the Sabbath to be kept so as to serve this end? Looking back here to the original statutes, and to the earlier practice of the Jewish people, you will find that there was but one positive injunction given; the cessation from all manner of work. The rest enjoined, however, could not be the rest of total and absolute inactivity. The work from which they were to cease could not be every doing of the human hand. Obviously it was the work of men's ordinary occupation or trades, the work by which the hours of common labour were filled by those engaged therein. There is, indeed, one prohibition, the only one, in which there is a specification of the kind of work to be desisted from, which would seem to point to a narrower interpretation

of the original command. When Moses had gathered all the congregation of Israel together at the base of Sinai, and the people were about to enter on the construction of the ark and the tabernacle, knowing with what hearty enthusiasm they were inspired, he prefaced his instructions as to the manner in which they should carry on the work, by saying, "Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you a holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the Lord; ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations on the Sabbath day." They did not need to be told to kindle no fire for any ordinary culinary purposes. A double portion of the manna fell upon the day preceding the Sabbath, and they were to seethe and bake the whole of it, so that no preparation of food on the Sabbath was required. Issued under such peculiar circumstances, it seems not unreasonable to believe that the particular object of the Mosaic injunction was to check the ardour of those who might otherwise have been tempted to carry on the mouldings and the castings in gold and silver on the Sabbath as on other days: not that the Jews of all after generations were pro-

hibited by Divine command from having a fire burning in their dwellings, for whatever purpose kindled, on the Sabbath day.

When we turn from what was prohibited to what was enjoined, we find a blank. One or two specific injunctions were indeed laid upon the priests. The daily sacrifices were to be doubled, and the shew-bread baked upon the Sabbath was to be renewed. That there was no Sabbatism in the Temple became in this way a proverb. But for the people at large there were no minute instructions as to how the day was to be spent. It could not have been made imperative on them to assemble for public worship on that day, for during the times of the Jewish theocracy there was no place but one—the Temple—for such worship, and the meeting there each seventh day was impossible. It was not till after the captivity that synagogues were erected all over the land, in which weekly assemblages for worship did take place; but that was done, not in obedience to any Divine command. It would seem, indeed, to have been the practice of the Jews, from the beginning, to gather round their pro-

phets on the Sabbath days, and to avail themselves of such means of religious instruction as they could command. Parents took advantage of the rest to teach the law unto their children. But there were no peculiar religious observances prescribed. The day was spent in rest, in thankfulness, in gladness; spent to a great extent as the festival days of other countries were spent. Dressed in their best attire, indulging in better fare, it was to feasting rather than to fasting that the Sabbath was devoted. But, as the faith of the people grew weak, and their allegiance to their Divine Sovereign faltered, they grew neglectful of the Sabbath, and began to profane the day by breaking in upon that rest from all the ordinary occupations of life, which should have been observed. Thus it was that, among other distinctive marks of their peculiarity as a consecrated people, the only worshippers of the Great Creator, this one became obscured and well-nigh obliterated. In the latest years of the Hebrew commonwealth prophet after prophet was raised up to testify against those defections from the faith, among which that of neglecting and profaning

the Sabbath occupied a conspicuous place. After the captivity, on the restoration of the Jews to their own land, the same lax habits prevailed. "In those days," says Nehemiah, "saw I in Judah some treading wine-presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day: and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals."[1] Nehemiah did more than testify. Alert and decisive in all his movements, he had the gates of Jerusalem shut when it began to be dark before the Sabbath, and kept them shut till the Sabbath was over. It is in the light of his sayings and doings that we are to interpret the utterance from the lips of Jeremiah: "Thus saith the Lord: Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers."[2]

[1] Neh. xiii. 15. [2] Jer. xvii. 21.

A singular change came over the spirit and habits of the Jewish people after the restoration from the Babylonian captivity. Previously, in the days of the kings and prophets, they were ever and anon showing a tendency to idolatry; subsequently no such tendency appears. Previously they had been neglectful of many of the distinctive rites and ceremonies of their faith; subsequently they became strict and punctilious in their observance of them. Great national calamities—the persecution under the successors of Alexander the Great, the wars of the Maccabees, the aggression of the Romans, the ascent into power of the Idumean family of the Herods, the establishment of the schools of the Rabbis—all conspired to intensify the national pride and religious bigotry of the Jews; who, as they had nothing but the old laws and traditions to cling to, clung to them with all the more tenacious grasp. The sect of the Pharisees arose, and carried the popular sympathy along with it. Everything regarded as purely and peculiarly Judaic was exaggerated. Punctilious observance of the old ritual was the one great merit compen-

sating for all defects; whilst around the simpler statute-law of Moses there arose an oral or traditional law, growing continually in bulk and overshadowing the primitive Mosaic institute. It had been a less evil had the original enactments of that institute continued to be rightly and liberally interpreted. Instead of this, the narrowest and most rigid interpretation was the only one allowed; and upon each statute as so interpreted additions and explanations were heaped, of such a character as to turn more and more the keeping of them into a mere matter of external routine and outward performance. So fared it with the old, broad and benignant law as to the Sabbath. Its primary injunction, "Thou shalt do no manner of work," was falsely held as aimed at all kinds of work whatever; no less than thirty-nine kinds or classes of work being specified as involved in the prohibition. It was ruled thus that grass should not be trodden on the Sabbath, for the bruising of it was a species of harvest work; that shoes with nails should not be worn, as that was the carrying a burden. To what absurd excesses such a spirit of interpretation led may be gathered

from the single instance of its being actually laid down in the Mishna that a tailor must not go out with his needle near dusk on the eve of the Sabbath, lest he should forget and carry it with him on the Sabbath. In all this there was not only a wrong rendering of the Mosaic precept, but beyond, and much worse than that, there was the erection of a false standard of duty, a false test of piety—the elevation of the outward, the positive, the ceremonial, over the inward, the moral, the spiritual; the putting of the letter that killeth above the spirit which maketh alive.

Now let us see how, born and brought up among a people filled with such prejudices, Jesus regulated his conduct. He knew that healing the diseased on the Sabbath day would be regarded as a breach of the Divine law, would shock the Pharisees, and run counter to the convictions of the great mass of the community. Did he abstain from effecting cures upon that day? He might easily have done so, as no applications were made to him. Much as they desired to have the benefit conferred, the people shrank from bringing their diseased to be cured on the holy day. Jesus had

only to meet their prejudices by doing nothing. But he did not choose to be thus silent and acquiescent. No less than seven miracles are recorded as wrought by him on the Sabbath day, some of them among the most conspicuous and memorable in his ministry:—1. The cure of the paralytic on the occasion of his second visit to Jerusalem. 2. The cure of the demoniac in the synagogue of Capernaum, when opening his ministry in Galilee. 3. The cure of Peter's wife's mother, the same afternoon, in the same city. 4. The cure of the man with a withered hand, a few Sabbaths afterwards, in the same city. 5. The cure of the man born blind, who sat begging in the porch of the Temple at Jerusalem. 6. The cure of a woman who had the spirit of infirmity for eighteen years. 7. The cure of the man with a dropsy who happened to be present at a feast given on a Sabbath day in the house of a chief publican, an invitation to which Jesus had accepted. Not one of these was effected in answer to any application made. They were all spontaneous, done of Christ's own free will and motion. Nor was there, in regard to most of them, any

urgency, requiring that the healing should have been done that day, if done at all. Jesus might have chosen another day rather than the Sabbath to walk through the crowded porches of Bethesda. The impotent man had lain too long there to make a day earlier or a day later of much moment to him. It was the same with the blind beggar of Jerusalem: and these were the two instances of cures upon the Sabbath day which drew most public notice and were attended with the most important results. But Jesus was not content with simply relieving the sufferers on these occasions. He did himself, or he bade his patients do, what he was well aware would attract the eye and draw down upon it the condemnation of the priesthood. How easy had it been for him at Bethesda to have cured the man in passing, and told him to lie quietly there till the next day, so that no one should have known anything of the cure. But he told him to take up his bed and carry it through the streets, obtruding thus on the eye of the spectators an act which seemed to be an open and flagrant breach of the command delivered by Jeremiah, "Thus saith the

Lord: Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day."[1] In curing the man born blind he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle, and anointed the eyes of the man with the ointment, and said unto him, Go wash in the pool of Siloam; both which acts, the making and applying of the ointment, and the washing in the sacred fountain, were deemed to be desecrations of the Sabbath. It thus appears that he not only voluntarily selected the Sabbath as the day for performing the cures, but wrought them in such a way, or accompanied with such directions, as forced them into notice, and involved others as well as himself in what was considered a crime of the deepest dye—involving in fact the penalty of death.

The paralytic of the porches and the blind beggar of the wayside could both indeed plead in their justification the command of their healer, and Jesus took upon himself the full responsibilities of their acts. In meeting the first challenge of his conduct as a Sabbath-breaker, Christ was content, as appears from the narrative in the

[1] Jer. xvii. 21.

fifth chapter of St. John's Gospel, to rest his defence on his Sonship to the Father—a sonship that might seem to entitle him to claim and exercise a liberty of action to which no other might legitimately aspire. But, putting that Sonship aside, had Christ's act in healing, and the man's act in carrying his bed, been violations of the Sabbath law? This question was left unsettled by our Lord's first defence of himself against the accusation of the Pharisees. It served to bring the matter out, not as one of Christ's peculiar character, position, and rights, but as one having reference simply to the true interpretation of the existing law, when it was an act of the disciples on which the charge of Sabbath-breaking was founded. One Sabbath day he and his disciples were walking through some cornfields in which the grain was already white unto the harvest. The disciples being an hungered, began to pluck the ears of corn, to rub them in their hands, and eat. In doing so, there was no violation by them, as there would be with us, of the rights of property. The old Jewish law ran thus:—"When thou comest into the standing

corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour's standing corn."[1] The law and practice of Palestine continue to be this day what they were so many thousand years ago. We travelled in that country once in spring. Our course lay through it before the ears of corn were full, but nothing surprised us more than the liberties which our guides took in riding through the fields and letting their horses eat as much of the standing corn as they pleased. We felt at first as if we were trespassers and thieves, but were relieved by finding that it was done under the eye, and with the full consent, of the owners of the crops. There was nothing wrong, then, in what the disciples of Jesus did. But it was done upon the Sabbath day, which was thought to be unlawful. And there were men who were watching—dogging the steps of Jesus and his disciples, perhaps to see whether in their walk they would exceed the distance to which a Sabbath-day's journey had been restricted. So soon as those lynx-eyed men

[1] Deut. xxiii. 25.

observe what the disciples were doing, they inform the Pharisees, who go to Jesus and say, "Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath day." They were only expressing the popular belief which they had helped to form. It had come to be generally believed that plucking and rubbing in the hand ears of corn was work that the Sabbath law condemned. Jesus threw a shield of defence over the act of his disciples by referring to the conduct of David, esteemed to be a model of Jewish piety. Once when he and his men were an hungered, he had not scrupled to break the rules, to violate the sanctity of the Holy Place. We may believe that it was on a Sabbath day he did so. Doubly appropriate, therefore, was the reference to it; but it was not essential to Christ's argument that the act was done upon the Sabbath day. What Christ mainly desired by his allusion to the case of David, was to establish the principle that the pressure of hunger vindicated the setting aside for the time of the strictest even of the Temple regulations. But these regulations, and the whole Temple-service which they sustained, were held

to be of such superior importance to the Sabbatic law, that when both could not be kept, the latter had to give way. A vast amount of what elsewhere would have been accounted as Sabbath-breaking went on every Sabbath day in the Temple. If the Temple, then, carried it over the Sabbath, and hunger carried it over the Temple, as free of fault as David and his men were—so free of fault were Christ's disciples. To whatever their hunger was due, it had come upon them owing to their connexion with him; and if in Jerusalem the Temple towered above the Sabbath and threw its protection over its servants engaged in its work, here in the fields of Galilee was one greater than the Temple, throwing his protection over his disciples as they followed him. They, too, must be acquitted.

But it is not enough that the act of his disciples be in this way vindicated. Our Lord seizes the opportunity to let the Pharisees know that they had mistaken the spirit and object of the ceremonial law, and particularly of the Sabbatic institute. "But if ye had known," he added, "what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice,

ye would not have condemned the guiltless." Jesus quotes here from the Book of Hosea[1] a saying which more than once he repeated. It was not a solitary one. Much to the same effect were the words which the first of the Prophets addressed to the first of the Kings: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."[2] The wisest of the Kings responds to the words of Samuel in the proverb, "To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice."[3] Isaiah and Jeremiah put words of the same import into Jehovah's lips: "I delight not, saith the Lord, in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well." "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices; but this thing commanded I them,

[1] Hos. vi. 6. [2] 1 Sam. xv. 22. [3] Prov. xxi. 3.

Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people; and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you."[1] There is something singularly impressive in hearing such emphatic testimonies to the comparative worthlessness of sacrifices and offerings, of all merely ritualistic observances issuing from the heart of the old Jewish economy; spoken at the very time when all those statutes and ordinances of the Lord were in full force, that define so minutely, and prescribe so peremptorily the formalities of Jewish worship.

Jesus, in quoting one of these testimonies, and applying it to the case of his disciples' conduct, puts Sabbath-keeping, so far as it consisted merely in abstaining from this or that kind of work, in the same category as sacrifice, regarding it as part of that formal and external mode of honouring and serving the Supreme which ought never to stand in the way of any work of need or of benevolence. Had the Pharisees but listened to the voice of their own prophets, they would have understood this; but, deaf to that voice, they

[1] Isa. i. 11, 16; Jer. vii. 21, 23.

had drawn tighter and tighter the bonds of the required Sabbatic service, ever narrowing the field of what was allowable on the seventh day, till they had laid a yoke upon men's shoulders too heavy for them to bear. From this yoke, at all hazard to himself, Jesus will relieve his countrymen, proclaiming in their ears the great and pregnant truth, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." The Sabbath is but a means to an end; that end is, man's present comfort, his spiritual and eternal good. Wherever, therefore, the keeping of the Sabbath in the way prescribed, instead of promoting would frustrate that end, it was more honoured in the breach than in the observance. It was never to be regarded as in itself an end. Apart from the physical, social, moral, and religious benefits to be thereby realized, there was no merit in painfully doing this one thing, or rigorously abstaining from that other. The Sabbath was made to serve man, but man was not made to serve or to be a slave to the Sabbath. And just because it was an institution which, when rightly used, is so eminently fitted to minister to man's present and

eternal good, the Son of Man, who came not to be ministered unto but to minister, as Head of our humanity, to render to it the greatest of all services, and to take all other servants of it under his care and keeping, would show himself to be Lord also of the Sabbath.

It was in this character that Jesus acted on the Sabbath which so closely followed the incident of the walk in the corn-fields. In some unnamed synagogue he sat and taught. A man whose right hand was withered stood before him. Had he been brought there to serve the purposes of these watchful enemies who wished, not simply to have his own acts to bring up against him (for these, as the acts of a prophet, might be regarded as privileged), but to get from him a distinct categorical reply to the question, whether it was lawful for any man who had the power of healing to exert it on the Sabbath day? So soon at least as they saw his eye fastened upon the man with the withered hand, and before he did anything, they interpose their question, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath days?" The question is met by an appeal to their own practice:

"What man shall there be among you that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days." But they shall not only have its lawfulness asserted, they shall see the good done before their eyes. Jesus bids the man with the withered hand stand forth. But ere he cures him he turns to the Scribes and Pharisees and puts in his turn a question cutting deep into their deceitful hearts: "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days,"—as I am doing—"or to do evil?" —as ye do in suspecting and maligning me;—"to save life,"—as I do—"or to kill,"—as ye are doing who are already meditating my death? There is no answer to this question. They stand speechless before him, but unconvinced and unrelenting.

"And Jesus looked round about on them with anger." The meek, and the gentle, and the patient one! What was it that filled his breast with such a glow of indignation, that it broke out in this unwonted look of anger? It was the sight of men, who, laying hold of one of his

Father's most merciful institutes—that which for man and beast, and the whole labouring creation, provided a day of returning rest, amid whose quiet the reflecting spirit of man might rise to the contemplation of its higher ends and its eternal destiny—instead of looking at the primary command to keep holy each seventh day, as it stood enshrined among those precepts which enjoined a supreme love to God, and a corresponding love to man, and allowing this one positive and external institute to receive its interpretation from those immutable moral laws among which it was interposed, had exalted it into a place of isolation and false importance, attaching a specific virtue to the bare outward keeping of the letter, magnifying to the uttermost the minutest acts of bodily service; finding therein the materials which the spirit of self-righteousness employed for its own low and sordid purposes, an instrument which it would have used for defrauding the poor and the needy and the diseased of that help which the hand of charity was ready to render;—such was the source of that anger with which Jesus looked round about on the Scribes and Pharisees,

But soon his eye, full of the expression of anger as it rests on them, becomes as full of pity as it rests on the man who still stands expectant before him. Jesus says to him, "Stretch forth thine hand." One can fancy the man replying, Which hand is it that you bid me thus stretch forth? Is it this one that hangs lifeless by my side? Oh, if I but saw its wrinkled flesh filled up, did I but feel restored the power that once was in it, too gladly would I do your bidding; but mock me not by telling me to stretch forth a hand from which you see, and I feel, all power is gone. Had the man thought so, spoken so, felt so, he might have carried his withered hand with him to the grave. But he did not so think, or feel, or act. He is spoken to by one of whom he believes that he can give the strength to execute the command he issues. It is in that faith he acts, and, paradoxical as it may seem, let us say, that if in that faith he had not made the effort, he never would have got the strength; and yet if he had not got the strength he never could have made the effort. And is it not thus that the Divine Redeemer still addresses us? Stretch

forth thy withered heart to love—thy withered hand to serve—such is his command. Fixing an eye of faith on him, who has already fixed his eye of love on us, let us make the effort, and in the very making of the effort we shall get the strength.

III.

THE CALLING TO THE APOSTOLATE OF ST. PETER, ST. ANDREW, ST. JAMES, ST. JOHN, AND ST. MATTHEW.[1]

EXTRAORDINARY success naturally excites exaggerated hopes. A sudden blaze of prosperity has blinded the strongest human eye. Nor can you point to any great enterprise, signally successful at its outset, of which you will not find it true that those engaged in it were, for a short time at least, seduced into exorbitant expectations. If ever any success might have operated in this way, it was that which attended the close of the first year of our Lord's ministry. The whole population of Galilee, a community of from two to three millions, stirred to its depths,—the excitement spreading all around, reaching eastward beyond the Jordan, westward to the coasts

[1] Luke v. 1-11; Matt. iv. 18-22, ix. 9-17; Mark i. 16-20, ii. 14-22; Luke v. 27-39.

of Tyre and Sidon, southward to the hill country of Judea. It is no longer, as in the days that followed the baptism by the banks of the Jordan, an obscure Nazarene travelling with a few friends who had attached themselves to his person, it is the great Worker of miracles, the Healer of all diseases, the Caster-out of devils, surrounded and pressed in upon so closely by admiring and enthusiastic crowds, that to get a few quiet hours he had to steal them from sleep—to spend them in the mountain solitudes. It is no longer in the synagogue and on the Sabbath-days alone that audiences are to be found; everywhere and at all times assemblages, often too large for his addressing them, are ready to hang upon his lips. But you search in vain through all the wonderful excitement and popularity which followed our Lord in his first circuit through Galilee, for the slightest evidence that any false or exaggerated expectations were cherished. The specious appearances that then surrounded Him never dazzled nor deceived his eye. He knew from the beginning how soon the sudden fervours of the first great commotion would subside—how soon the

tide that swelled so high would ebb away. He knew that had he left to themselves those among whom he lived and laboured, had he done nothing to bind some of them to himself by ties closer and stronger than any they naturally or spontaneously would have formed, he would at the close have been left alone. And therefore it was that at the very time when his popularity was at the highest, he took the first step towards binding to himself twelve chosen men in links which, besides all the pains that he took himself to forge and fasten them, needed the welding forces of the day of Pentecost to make them strong enough to bind them everlastingly to him.

To these twelve men, an office, secondary only to the one he himself discharged, was to be assigned. They were always to be with him, the spectators and reporters of all he said, and did, and suffered. They were to share and multiply his labours, to protect and relieve him from the pressure to which he was exposed. For a short season he was to send them from his side, to teach and to work miracles as he did

himself, that a short fore-trial might be made of the work in which they were afterwards to be engaged. After his death they were to be the witnesses of the Resurrection, the expounders of that Gospel which needed the great decease to be accomplished ere in its full measure it could be proclaimed. By their hands the foundations of the Church were to be laid. Let us note, then, the first steps in their calling to this high office.

On his return from the Temptation, by the banks of the Jordan, and on their way thence to Galilee, five men—Andrew, John, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael—had temporarily attached themselves to Jesus. Of these, only one—Philip—had been called by our Lord himself to follow him. The others were attracted by what they heard about him, or saw in him. At first, however, it was but a loose and uncertain bond that united them to Jesus. All the five were present, we may believe, at the marriage feast at Cana, and may have gone up with him to Jerusalem, to the first Passover which he attended after his baptism. But they did not remain in constant attendance upon his person. After his first

circuit of Galilee, when his fame was at its height, three of them had returned to their ordinary occupation as fishermen. With them a fourth became associated. As Andrew had brought his brother Peter to Jesus, we may imagine that the same service had been rendered by John to his brother James; so that all the four were already well known to Christ, had enjoyed much familiar intercourse with him, and had appeared often openly as his followers. Perhaps it was the common bond of discipleship to him which in the course of the year had drawn them into closer union with one another. Peter and Andrew had previously resided at Bethsaida, a town at the north-eastern extremity of the lake, but they had now removed to Capernaum, had entered into partnership with the two sons of Zebedee, and had been plying their craft together on the lake, when all the four were pointedly and specially summoned in a way they never before had been to follow the Lord.

The difficulties that many have felt in harmonizing the narratives in the fourth chapter of St. Matthew and first chapter of St. Mark, with that

in the fifth chapter of St. Luke, have led them to believe that two such summonses were given; that on the first occasion—the one referred to by the two former—the four had answered the appeal by an immediate throwing up of their occupation by the lake side, but that they had again, and not long afterwards, resumed it, requiring a still more impressive instrumentality finally to sever the bonds. We are inclined rather to believe that all which the three Evangelists relate occurred in the course of the same morning, and that it happened somewhat in this manner:—

The day had dawned. From his solitary place of rest and prayer, somewhere among the neighbouring hills, Jesus had come down to the quiet beach as the first light of the morning struck across the placid bosom of the lake. The unproductive toil of the night was nearly over for the fishermen. Out a little distance upon the waters, Peter and Andrew had cast in their net for the last time as Jesus approached the shore. But his progress was interrupted by the crowds hurrying out of Capernaum, so soon as it was known that he was there. Through these crowds—stopping

occasionally to address a few words to them—Jesus made his way to one or other of those small creeks or inlets, still to be seen there, where a boat could ride a few feet from the shore, and the people, seated on either side and before the speaker, could listen quietly to one addressing them from the boat. Here, in this creek two boats were drawn up, the property of the four—the two pairs of brothers already spoken of. The fishermen had gone out of them, and were mending their nets; not so far away, however, but that one of them, Peter, noticing the Lord's approach, had returned. Entering into his boat, Jesus asked Peter to thrust out a little from the land; and when this was done, he sat down and taught the people out of the boat. The teaching over, Jesus turned to Peter, and said to him, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught"—a singular command to come from one who knew so little—might be supposed to care so little—about the fisherman's craft. Still it came so decidedly from one whom Peter had already learned to address as Master, that, with a few words of explanation, indicative of the smallness

of his hope, he prepares to comply with it. "Master," he says, "we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing; nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net." He calls his brother, and launches out—lets down the net. At once such a multitude of fishes is enclosed, that the boat begins to fill—the net to break. Excited by what they had seen, James and John had by this time launched their boat, and Peter beckons them to come and help. They come, but all the help they can give is scarce sufficient. Both boats are filled, and almost sinking as they get ashore.

Peter had already seen Jesus do wonderful things—turn water into wine, eject the devil from the demoniac, raise his own wife's mother from the fever-bed; but somehow this wonder came home to him as none of them had done —wrought in his own vessel, with his own net, in the way of his own calling, after his own fruitless toil. Never had the impression of a Divine Power at work in his immediate presence taken such a hold of him. Never had the sense of his being in close contact with One in whom such

power resided come so upon his spirit. Astonishment, fear, humiliation—the impression, not of his weakness only, but of his sinfulness—of his unworthiness to stand in such a presence—fill and overwhelm his open, ardent, impressible spirit. He falls at Jesus' knees, as he sat there in the boat, quietly watching all the stir and bustle of the fishermen; and he gives vent to the feeling that for a moment is uppermost, as he exclaims, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" And ever still, when the first clear and overpowering revelation is made to any man of an Almighty Being compassing his path, besetting him before and behind, laying his hand upon him,—ever when the first true and real contact takes place of the human spirit with the living God as the Being with whom we have so closely and constantly to do, will something like the same effect be realized. So was it with him who said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." So was it with him who said, "Woe is me! for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell

in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

"Depart from me." Nothing could have surprised Peter more than the Lord's taking him at his word—then and for ever after turning his back upon him. No man then living would have felt such a forsaking more. Wishing to express how unfit he felt himself for such a presence, Peter, with his wonted rashness, had said more than he really meant. He asks Christ to go, yet he clings to him. "I am a sinful man, O Lord." Jesus knows that better than Peter does. Peter will know it better when the Lord looks at him in the judgment-hall, and he goes out to weep over his denials. But Jesus knows, also, that it is because he is so sinful a man he must not be forsaken. And though he is so sinful a man, yet still he may be chosen to stand in closest relationship to his Master. "Fear not," said Jesus to him; "from henceforth thou shalt catch men."

The words of direction, assurance, promise, addressed in the first instance to Peter alone, were soon repeated to his three associates. The shore was reached, the boats hauled up, the fish

disposed of, James and John had carried the broken nets away to a little distance to mend them, when first to the one pair of brothers, and then to the other, Jesus said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." And immediately they left boats and nets, and two of them their father, and forsook all, and followed him. We may think it was not much that they had to leave, but it was their all; and the promptness and entireness of their relinquishment of it shows what power over them the Saviour had already got—what a readiness for service and for sacrifice was already in them. And these were the four men who ever after stood most closely associated with Jesus—the four who stand at the head of every list of the twelve Apostles.

It was not indeed till some time after this that, along with the other eight, they were set apart to the peculiar office of the Apostolate. This calling of them away from their former avocations, this attaching of them permanently to his person, was a marked step toward their instalment in that position. It was the same with Matthew, the publican. The high road from Damascus south-

ward to Judea and Egypt ran from the slopes of Mount Hermon down to the northern extremity of the Sea of Galilee, and for a short distance skirted along the north-western shore of the lake, passing through Capernaum. On the side of this road, close to the lake, stood the booth in which Matthew sat levying the toll on the passengers and their goods. He was one of a hated and degraded class. The payment of the taxes exacted by the foreigners under whose rule they were, irritated to the last degree the Jews, who regarded it as a visible sign and token of their bondage. The strong feeling thus excited spent itself on all who had anything to do with the collection of these taxes. No Jew who desired to stand well with his fellow-countrymen would be a tax-gatherer. The office was commonly held by foreigners, or by those who cared but little for a purely Jewish reputation. Matthew was a Jew, yet he had become a publican, and now he is sitting at the receipt of custom as Jesus passed by. We know nothing of his personal character or previous habits. Considering that a year at least had passed since Jesus had first appeared as

a public teacher in Galilee—that so prominent a part of his ministry had been conducted in the very neighbourhood in which Matthew lived—it may be regarded as a violent supposition that there had been no previous acquaintance and intercourse between him and our Lord. It would be more in keeping with Christ's conduct in other instances to imagine that, so far as his occupation had permitted, Matthew had already appeared as a follower of the new teacher, had shown himself to have been favourably affected towards him. However it was, Jesus saw in him a man who, under right teaching and training, would be well suited for the high office he intended to confer upon him; and so, despite of the invidious office he now held, Jesus stopped as he passed by—said, "Follow me;" and "he left all, rose up, and followed him," throwing up thus a lucrative engagement, and casting in his lot with the small but growing band which Jesus was forming.

So soon as it was known that a publican had not only been seen in the following of Jesus—which might have occurred and occasioned no remark—but that Jesus had actually selected a

publican and invited him to become one of his immediate attendants, a great commotion among the Scribes and Pharisees arose. It was a public scandal, an offence against all propriety, that one pretending to be a religious guide of the people—one preaching the Kingdom of God—should call a publican to his side, and take him into his confidence. Bad enough that he should himself be seen breaking the Sabbath and encouraging his disciples to do so likewise, but to pass by all the respectable inhabitants of Capernaum—so many of whom were conspicuous for the strictness of their observance of all the Jewish ordinances,—and to confer such a mark of favour upon a man with whom none of them would associate—what was to be thought of such an act? But the worst had not yet come. Either instantly upon his throwing up his office, or a few days thereafter, this Matthew makes a feast—a farewell one, it would seem—to which a number of his old friends and associates were invited, and there Jesus and his disciples were to be seen sitting among the other guests. The Pharisees could not stand this. They did not venture, indeed, to go and openly

reproach Christ personally with it. They were smarting too keenly under the recent rebuke they had got from him to have courage to do so, but they go to his disciples, and they say to them, "Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?" Jesus does not leave it to the disciples to reply. As in so many other instances, he takes the matter into his own hands, and, half in irony, half in earnest, he says to them, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that be sick." They thought themselves the hale and healthy; they spake of these publicans and sinners as corrupt and diseased;—why, then, blame him if he, as the great Physician, went where his services were most required? It was sinners, not the righteous, that he came to call to repentance. If they needed no repentance, why blame him if he went to call those whose ears were open to his entreaties? But were they, indeed, so much better than those whom they despised? The difference between them was far more an outward, a ceremonial, than an inward, a moral, a spiritual one. Many of these poor publicans and sinners—excommunicated though they might be—very

careless about religious rites—were men of simpler, truer, more honest natures, kindlier in their dispositions, and in a sense, too, more devout, than many of these pretentious pietists. "Go," said Jesus to those who imagined themselves to be righteous and despised others—"Go, and learn what that meaneth: I will have mercy and not sacrifice"—mercy rather than sacrifice if the two be put in comparison; mercy alone, and no sacrifice, if the two are put in opposition—mercy among publicans and sinners rather than sacrifice or any amount of ceremonial observances among Scribes and Pharisees.

But now another class interferes, to make common cause with the Pharisees. Some of the disciples of John the Baptist had early seen the superiority of Jesus, and at their master's own instance had enrolled themselves among his followers. But others stood aloof, having more in them of the old Judaic spirit—attracted as much by the ascetic habits of the Baptist as by anything about him—recognising in the fasts that he kept, the prayers that he himself offered and taught his disciples to offer, a return to a still

purer and stricter piety than even that which the Pharisees practised. It was a strange and repulsive thing to such, at the very hour when their master was cast into prison and they were mourning and fasting more than usual on this account, to see Jesus and his disciples going about eating and drinking—nay, accepting invitations to festive entertainments in publicans' houses. St. Matthew tells us that these disciples of John went at once to Jesus with their complaint. St. Mark completes the picture by informing us that the Pharisees joined with them in the complaint. Nothing more likely than that when the one saw how differently the discipleship of Jesus was developing itself from what they had expected, they should rather fall back upon the austerity of Pharisaism, with its frequent fastings and many prescribed exercises of devotion—nothing more natural than that the Pharisees should seize upon the occasion and ally themselves with the followers of the Baptist, to aim thereby a fresh blow at Christ's authority and influence over the people. Christ's answer meets both sets of complainers. "And Jesus

said unto them, Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast."[1] In the last testimony that the Baptist had borne to Jesus had he not said, "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice." The position that John had thus claimed for himself, those disciples against whom the complaint was lodged were now occupying. They were the friends of the bridegroom —standing and hearing and rejoicing—was it a time for them to mourn and to fast? The days were to come when the bridegroom should be taken away from them, then should they fast—the fasting flowing spontaneously, unbidden, from the grief. There is no general command here prescribing fasting, but simply a prophecy, referring to a peculiar and brief period in the history of the Lord's disciples; a prophecy, however, rich in the intimation it conveys that all

[1] Matt. ix. 15.

external acts and exercises, such as that of fasting, should spring naturally out of some pure and deep emotion of the heart seeking for itself an appropriate expression.

And now two short parables are added by our Lord: the first we may regard as peculiarly applicable to the disciples of John, the other to the Pharisees. "No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse."[1] No man would take a piece of new, raw cloth, which would not keep its form afterwards, which, when wet, would shrink, and sew it into the rent of an old garment; for ere long, when the new piece put in contracted, it would tear itself away from the old, and the rent would be made worse. And let not the disciples of the Baptist think that this new piece of their master's asceticism, with its new fastings and new prayers, was to be sewed, as they seemed to wish to do, into the old, worn-out, rent garment of Pharisaism. To try that, would be to try to unite what could not lastingly be conjoined;

[1] Matt. ix. 16.

instead of closing up the rent, it would be to make it wider than ever. "Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved."[1] No man taketh old, dry, withered skin bottles, such as then were used, and filleth them with new wine; for the new wine would ferment, expand, and the bottles be burst, and the wine spilled and lost. And let not the Pharisees think that the new wine of the kingdom, the fresh spirit of love to God and man, which Jesus came to breathe into regenerated humanity, could be safely poured into their old bottles—into those forms and ceremonies of worship, dry as dust, and brittle as the thinnest and most withered piece of leather. No, there must be new bottles for the new wine, bottles that will yield to the pressure from within, and expand as the fermenting liquid which they contain expanded. And such new bottles as were thus required Jesus was finding—not in priestly men, chained up from childhood within priestly habits

[1] Matt. ix. 17.

—not in those fixed and rigid Levitical institutions which the long years that had been draining them of their vitality had been stiffening into an immovable inflexibility: but in these fishermen, these publicans—natural, homely, unlearned men, open to imbibe his spirit in all its richness and expansiveness; and in those simple forms and institutions of Christianity, which, cramped by no formal and immutable injunctions, were to be left free to take such new outward shapes as the indwelling spirit might mould.

These two homely parables of our Lord, so specially adapted as they were to the circumstances in which they were uttered,—the individuals to whom they were addressed—do they not carry with them a lesson to all times and ages of Christianity? Do they not remind us of the absolute incompatibility of the legal and the evangelical obedience—the spirit of the Law and the spirit of the Gospel? There is a religion, of which the Pharisaism of Christ's days was an exaggerated specimen—the very heart and soul of which consists in penances, and prayers, and fastings,—in worship offered, in duties done, in

sacrifices made, in mortifications inflicted and endured,—all to soothe an agitated conscience, to win a peace with God, to eke out a hope of heaven. To this the faith that is in Christ our Saviour stands directly and diametrically opposed —the one offering as a free gift what the other toils after as a reward; the one inviting us to begin where the other would have us end; the one putting forgiveness and acceptance with God in our hand and calling upon us, in the free spirit of his redeemed, forgiven, adopted children, to live, and serve, and in all things to submit to our Father which is in heaven—the other holding out the forgiveness and the acceptance away in the distance, and calling upon us, in the spirit of bondage, to labour all through life for their attainment; the one the old tattered garment, the other the piece of the new-made cloth.

And the wine of the kingdom, ever as it pours itself afresh from its fountain-head on high into the spirit of man, is it not a new wine that needs new bottles to contain it? If it be indeed the Spirit of Christ which is working in hearts that have been opened to receive it, may we not safely

leave it to its own operation there, and allow it to shape the vessel that holds it as it likes? Both, indeed, are needed,—the outward form, the inner spirit; nor will any wise or thoughtful man rashly touch, or mould into different shape the first, thinking thereby to improve the second; but neither will he hinder or hamper the second if by its own proper motion it is going on gently to remould the first.

IV.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.[1]

THE traveller from Jerusalem gets his first sight of the Sea of Galilee from the top of Mount Tabor. It is but a small corner of the lake that he sees, lying miles away, deep sunk among the hills. Descending from the height whence this first glimpse of the lake is got, the road to Tiberias leads over an elevated undulating plateau, the one marked feature of which is a curious double-peaked hill, rising about fifty or sixty feet above the general level of the surrounding table-land, and sloping down on its eastern side into the plain of Gennesaret. From the two prominences it presents this hill is called the Horns of Hattin,—Hattin being a village at its base. It overlooks the lake and the plain. You see

[1] Matt. v. vi. vii.; Luke vi. 20-49.

Capernaum from its summit, lying across the valley about seven miles off. As seen again from Capernaum and the plain, it appears as the highest and loneliest elevation that rises upon that side of the lake. It would naturally be spoken of by the inhabitants of Capernaum and its neighbourhood, even as St. Matthew speaks of it, as *the* mountain. It would naturally be the place to which any one seeking for solitude would retire. When somewhere in its neighbourhood there came around our Lord "a great multitude of people out of all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, and from Galilee and Decapolis, and from Idumea and from beyond Jordan,"[1] and when, seeking relief from the pressure, it is said that he went up into a mountain, no one so likely to be the one referred to by the Evangelist as the Horns of Hattin,—to which, as the supposed place of their utterance, the name of the Mount of the Beatitudes has for ages been given.

The night upon this mountain was spent by Christ in prayer—alone perhaps upon the higher

[1] Luke vi. 17; Mark iii. 8; Matt. iv. 25.

summit, the disciples slumbering below. At dawn he called them to him, and out of them he chose the twelve, and ordained them "that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach." But on what principle was the selection made? in what manner was the ordination effected? It may be presumed that some regard was had to the personal qualifications of those whom the Lord chose for this high office. We know indeed too little of any but two or three of the twelve to trace the special fitness of the human instrument for the work given it to do. Of all but one, however, we may believe that such fitness did exist. But how came that one to be numbered with the rest? It is possible that Judas may have done much to obtrude himself, or that others may have done much to obtrude him upon the notice of the Saviour. We read of one who, with great professions of attachment, volunteered to become a disciple, saying to Jesus, "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest;" whom Jesus neither rejected nor welcomed, meeting his declaration of adherence with the ominous words, "The foxes have holes, and

the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." If, as some have thought, the man who came forward in this way and pressed himself into the discipleship were Judas—if he was a man of acknowledged ability and considerable influence, whom no one at the time had the slightest reason to suspect, who was welcomed by all the other disciples, and commended by them to their Master as a most desirable associate—if the rejection of such a man in such circumstances would have seemed to be an act of caprice without known or apparent reason, this might serve perhaps in some slight degree to explain to us how Judas came at first to be numbered with the twelve. Many will feel as if there were something like profanity in any conjecture of this kind, and all will be satisfied simply to accept the fact that Jesus chose those twelve men, and yet that one of them was a devil.

Was it by simple designation to the office without any form or ceremony? or was it by laying of Christ's hand solemnly on the head of each, then gathering the circle round him and

offering up a consecration prayer, that the apostles were set apart? We cannot tell. It is surely singular, however, that the manner of the ordination of the apostles by our Lord himself, in like manner as the ordination of the first presbyters or bishops of the Church by the apostles, should have been left unnoticed and undescribed.

The ordination over, Jesus descended to a level spot, either between the two summits or lying at their base.[1] The day had now advanced, and the great multitude that had followed him, apprised of his place of retreat, poured in upon him, bringing their diseased along with them. He stood for a time healing all who were brought to him. Retreating then again to the mountain-side, he sat down. His disciples seated themselves immediately around him, and the great multitude stood or sat upon the level ground below.

Such were the circumstances under which the Sermon on the Mount was delivered. It may have been the first discourse of the kind which St. Matthew had heard; all the more natural, therefore, that he should have been directed to

[1] Luke vi. 17.

preserve so full a record of it. We have no authority for saying that it was actually the first formal and lengthened address delivered by our Lord. Many other longer or shorter discourses, to smaller or larger audiences, may Jesus have spoken during this period of his ministry. But this was the one selected by Divine Wisdom to be presented as a specimen or sample of our Lord's teaching, as addressed to mixed Galilean audiences in the earlier stages of his ministry. There was a change in his mode of teaching afterwards, even in Galilee, as there was a marked difference between all his discourses there, and those addressed to very different audiences in Jerusalem. Here upon the mount he had a vast concourse of people of all castes and from all quarters before him. Nearest to him were his own disciples. To them his words were in the first instance spoken, but they were meant to reach the consciences and hearts of the motley crowd that lay beyond.

Now, if there was one sentiment spread more widely than another throughout this crowd, it was the vague yet ardent expectation, beating

then in almost every Jewish breast, of some great national deliverance—of the near approach of a new kingdom—the kingdom of God. Of this kingdom they had no higher conception than that it would be a free and independent outward and visible Jewish monarchy. And when it came, then should come the days of liberty and peace, of honour and triumph, and all kinds of blessedness for poor oppressed Judea. With what a delicate hand—not openly and rudely rebuking, yet laying the axe withal at its very roots—was this deep national prejudice now treated by our Lord. What could have run more directly counter to the earthly ambitious hopes, swelling up within the hearts of those around him? what could have served more effectually to check them, than the very first words which Jesus uttered? "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the

pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you." How different the kind of blessedness thus described from that which his hearers had been hungering and thirsting after! How different the kind of kingdom thus described from that which they had been expecting he should set up! And, apart from their special use and immediate service as addressed of old to the Galilean audience, these beatitudes remain to teach us wherein the only true, pure, lasting blessedness for man consists; not in anything outward, not in the gratification of any of our natural passions or desires, our covetousness, or our pride, or our ambition, or our love of pleasure; not in what we have, but in what we are in God's sight and in relation to his

empire over our souls. The poor in spirit, those most deeply conscious of their spiritual poverty, their want of that which can alone find favour with God; the mourners whose grief is the fruit of guilt and unworthiness realized and deeply felt; the meek, who bow patiently and submissively to every stroke, whoever be the smiter; the hungerers and thirsters after righteousness, the pure in heart, the peace-makers, the persecuted for righteousness' sake—do we regard these as the happiest of our race? is theirs the kind of happiness upon which our heart is chiefly set, and which we are labouring with our utmost efforts to realize? If not, however ready we may be to extol the pure and high morality of the Sermon on the Mount, we have failed to take in the first and one of the greatest truths which it conveys, as to the source, and seat, and character, and conditions of the only abiding and indestructible blessedness of sinful man.

But while the multitude were cherishing false ideas and expectations about his kingdom, many were cherishing false ideas and fears about Christ himself that equally required to be removed.

They had noticed in his teaching the absence of any reference to many of those religious services that they so punctiliously performed, some disregard of them in his own practice and in that of his disciples. This man, they began to say, is an enemy to Moses. He is aiming at nothing short of a subversion of the old, the heaven-given law. Jesus must proclaim how untrue the accusation was. "Think not," he said, "that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." But in what did the true fulfilment of the Mosaic law consist? It was a vast and complicated code, embracing a body of laws for a peculiar people, existing at a particular period, and organized for a special purpose; subject, therefore, to all the limitations and exhibiting all the adaptations to existing circumstances which, in proportion to the wisdom with which it is framed, all such legislation must display. It had in it commands of a purely ethical and religious character, conveyed in more general and abstract

forms; and it had in it a large apparatus of positive enactments and ordinances chiefly meant to symbolize the truths and facts of the Christian dispensation. It was not throughout an expression of God's absolute will, perfect, immutable, meant to be of permanent and universal obligation. Part of it, perfectly adapted to its design, was inherently imperfect; part of it as necessarily transitory. When the time came that the Jewish nation should either cease to exist or cease to have its old functions to discharge, and when all its types and ceremonies had their true meaning expressed and their ends accomplished—then out of this complicated law there would come to be extracted that which was absolutely perfect and universally obligatory. Jesus knew that at his advent that time had come, and assuming the very place and exercising the very prerogative of the Divine Legislator of the Jews, he begins in this Sermon on the Mount to execute this task. He treats the old Jewish practice of divorce as imperfect, being adapted to a single nation at a particular stage of its moral training, and lays down the original and perfect law of the marriage

relationship. In like manner he deals with the *lex talionis*—the rule of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, and with the law and custom as to oaths. But it is especially in his treatment of those commandments about whose permanent obligation there was and could be no doubt, that the novelty and value of his teaching displayed itself. These were negative and prohibitory in their form. Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not commit adultery, etc. etc. They had been looked at in the letter rather than in the spirit. They had been regarded simply as prohibitions of certain outward acts or crimes. Abstinence from the forbidden deeds had been taken as a keeping of the Divine commands. Obedience had thus come to be looked upon as a thing of outward constraint or mechanical conformity, its merit lying in the force of the constraint, the exactness of the conformity. It was thus that the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees consisted mainly in a stiff and formal adherence to the letter of the precept, to the neglect often, and sometimes to the contradiction of its spirit. This fatal error Christ exposes, taking up command-

ment after commandment, unfolding the spirituality and extent of the requirement, showing how it reached not simply or mainly to the regulation of the outward conduct, but primarily and above all things to the state of the heart; that murder lay in embryo in an angry feeling, that adultery lurked in a licentious look, that it was not alone when the name of God was vainly used that irreverence might be exhibited and profane swearing practised, that the old Jewish rule of retaliation was no rule for the regulation of the affections or the guidance of the conduct in a pure and perfect state, that from the heart every sentiment of malice or revenge must be banished, and in the conduct the evil done to us by another remain unresented, unavenged, the enemy to be loved, the persecutor to be prayed for; and all this done that we might be merciful as our Father that is in heaven is merciful, perfect as he is perfect, children of him who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and on the unjust.

This end and aim of being like to, of being imitators of God, was one too pure, too high, too

holy to suffer corruption and the worm to enter into it by admixture with the selfish and ignoble motive of courting human approval, winning human applause. Too much of the almsgiving and the fasting and the praying that he saw practised around him was done to be seen of men—prompted by no other motive, was nothing but hypocrisy, utterly offensive to his Father in heaven. Concealed and unostentatious let the givings and the fastings be, short and simple and secret the prayers of those who would be his disciples and true children of his Father, whom seeing in secret he would in due time openly reward.

Let all be done as unto him with an undivided allegiance, for no man can serve two masters; and with an unbounded trust, for, having such a Father, why should there be any over-carefulness for earthly things—those things that He knows we have need of, or any undue concern about a future which is not ours but his? Why so anxious about food and raiment? It is God who sustains the life of the body, you must trust him for that—the greater thing; then why distrust him for

the less? Behold the fowls of the air; consider the lilies of the field; look at the grass that grows beneath your feet. Not theirs, as yours, the capacity for trust and toil and foresight. A worthless fleeting existence theirs as compared with yours; yet see how they are not only cared for but lavishly adorned. "Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Conscious of your own far shortcomings from that perfect confidence you should cherish—that constant service you should be rendering, be not severe in criticising or condemning others. Judge not that ye be not judged. "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, and considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite; first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."

It may be very difficult to be all, to do all that I am now telling you you ought to be and to do;

but is there not an open and effectual way for having every felt spiritual want relieved? "Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." "Ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

Drawing from the exhaustless fountain of grace and strength that in him is opened to you, fear not to adopt this as the one comprehensive rule of your whole bearing and conduct toward others. "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."

Before the days of Christ there was a great Jewish teacher, Hillel. An inquirer once came to him asking the strange question: "Can you teach one the whole law during the time that I am able to stand on one foot?" "Yes," said Hillel, "it is contained in this one rule: Whatsoever ye would not wish that your neighbour should do to you, do it *no* to him." This and other sayings of preceding Rabbis have been

quoted with a view of detracting somewhat from the originality of the moral teaching of Christ. Yet even here, while the resemblance between the lessons taught is so marked, one grand difference may be discerned—a difference that runs through so large a part of the Saviour's precepts as compared with those of all other moral legislators. He translates the negative into the positive. With him it is not—be not, do not; but, be and do. In few instances are any specific rules of conduct laid down. To plant the right spirit and motive in the heart, out of which all true morality proceeds, is the great object He aims at. Look up to God, he says to us, as indeed your Father—ever living, ever loving, patiently bearing with you, largely providing for you, willing to forgive you. Walk humbly, meekly, trustingly before him. Commit your way to him, cast all your care on him, seek all your supplies from him, render all your returns to him. Look upon all your fellow-men as children of the same father, members of the same family. Love each other, and live together as brethren, bearing yourselves towards all around you patiently, forgivingly,

generously, hopefully. The gate thus opened is strait, the way is narrow, but it is the only one that leadeth unto life. And finally, remember that it is practice, not profession, that can alone conduct you along the path to the throne in heaven. Hear then, and do, that ye may be like the wise man who built his house upon a rock, "and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock."

Such is a rapid, imperfect sketch of the Sermon on the Mount, regarded mainly from a historical point of view, in its bearings upon the audience to which it was originally addressed. The people who first heard it, we are told, were astonished at its doctrine. Well they might. It was so different from what they had been accustomed to. No laboured argument, no profound discussion, no doubtful disputation, no nice distinctions, no scheme of doctrines formally and elaborately propounded, no exact routine of religious services prescribed. It dealt with the simplest, plainest moral and religious truths and duties; and did this in the simplest, plainest manner;—directly,

familiarly, colloquially—a freshness about it like that of the morning breeze which played over the mountain-side. The thing, however, that seems to have struck the listeners most, was the calm, unhesitating, authoritative tone in which the whole was uttered. "They were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes." Here is One who comes forth from none of the great schools, —who has sat at the feet of none of the great masters,—who uses no book language,—who appeals to no authority but his own—a young untaught Nazarene; and yet he takes it upon him to pronounce with the utmost confidence as to who the truly blessed are, and reckons among them those who were to be railed at and persecuted for his sake. Here is One who does not shrink from taking into his hands the law and the prophets, acting not simply as their expositor —the clearer of them from all false traditional interpretations. He is bold enough to say that he came to fulfil them; in one remarkable instance, at least—that of the law which permitted divorce—speaking as the original lawgiver was alone entitled to do, declaring that the time for

this permission had now ceased, and that henceforth such divorces as Moses had tolerated were not to be allowed. Here is One who speaks of God as one who fully knew, and had a right to declare, how his children were to act so as to please him; whom he would forgive, whom he would reward, upon whom he would bestow his gifts. Here is One who, though seated on that Galilean mountain, with nothing to distinguish him from the humble fishermen around him, speaks of a day on which he should be seated on the throne of universal judgment, to whom many should say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?"—to whom he was to reply, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

In consequence of the simplicity, purity, and elevation of the moral precepts which it contains, and still more, perhaps, because of none of the peculiar doctrines as to the person, character, office, and work of Christ as the Mediator being found in it, this Sermon on the Mount has been greedily seized upon and highly extolled by

many as the true epitome of Christianity—as Christ's own gospel coming from his own lips. But it is far less difficult for us to discern the reasons why the truths of the incarnation and the propitiatory sacrifice were not at this time and to that audience alluded to or dwelt upon by Jesus, than it is for any who would reduce him to the level of a mere moral legislator to account for the position which, even when enunciating the simplest moral precepts, he assumed —for the tone of authority in which he speaks. Dimly, indeed, through this Sermon on the Mount does the Jesus of the Cross appear, but the Jesus of the Throne is here, and once that we have learned from other after-teachings of himself and his Apostles to know, and love, and trust in him as our great High Priest, who has bought us with his blood, it will be the habit and delight of every true and faithful follower of his to take up and dwell upon that wonderful discourse, in which, more clearly and fully than in any other words of human speech, the very spirit and essence of a humble child-like faith in God, and the lofty ideal of a perfect, a heavenly morality, is unfolded and enforced.

V.

THE RAISING OF THE WIDOW'S SON AND THE RULER'S DAUGHTER.[1]

THE multitude that listened to the Sermon on the Mount followed Jesus from the hill-side into Capernaum, thronging round the house into which he entered, and pressing their sick so urgently on his notice that he "could not so much as eat bread." A mode of life like this,—out all night upon the mountain top, teaching, walking, working all day long without food or rest,—so affected the minds of his immediate relatives when they heard of it that they "went out to lay hold of him, for they said, He is beside himself." Failing in their endeavours, they left him to pursue his eccentric course.

It was in the course of the busy day which

[1] Luke vii. 11-17; viii. 41-56; Matt. ix. 18-26; Mark v. 22-43.

followed the delivery of the Sermon on the Mount that the centurion's servant was healed, and the opportunity was thereby given to Jesus to hold up to the eyes of the people an example of such faith as he had not found—no, not in Israel. On the following day he left Capernaum. "Many of his disciples and much people" went with him. They had a long day's walk over the hills of Galilee, skirting the base of Tabor, and descending into the valley of Esdraelon. The sun was sinking in the west, away behind the ridge of Carmel, and was gilding with his evening beams the slopes of little Hermon, as Jesus and the band which followed him approached the village of Nain. This village is now a confused heap of the rudest Syrian huts, unenclosed, with no ruins of ancient buildings, nor any antiquities around, save the tombs in the rock upon the hill-side, where for ages they have buried the dead. And yet it stands next to Nazareth and Bethlehem and Bethany in the sacred interest attached to it. We are so sure of its identity, it is so small, so isolated, having nothing but the one wonderful incident to mark its history, that the Saviour's

living presence was almost as vividly realized by us when entering it as when we sat by the side of Jacob's well. We stood at the end of the village which looks northward towards Galilee, and tried to recall the scene. Jesus and his train of followers have crossed the plain, and are drawing near to the village. Another company moves slowly and sadly out of its gate and meets them. It is a funeral procession; a large one, for all the villagers have come forth, but there is no mark or token that it is the funeral of one who had been rich or in any way distinguished. The bier is of the plainest, and there follows it as chief mourner a solitary woman, clad in humblest guise. Jesus has none beside him, as he stops and looks, to tell him who this woman is—who the dead for whom she mourns. He does not need the information; he knows her history; he knows her grief better than any inhabitant of Nain. To his eye it is a becoming and beautiful thing that grief like hers should have such homage paid to it, should have drawn the whole village out after her by the pure force of sympathy. Her claim, indeed, upon that sympathy is strong.

This is not the first bier she has followed. She had wept for another before she wept for him whom they are now carrying to the grave. She is a widow—weeping now behind the bier of her only son. Bereft of every earthly stay she walks, a picture of perfect desolation.

"And when the Lord saw her he had compassion on her." As soon as his eye rests on her his heart fills full of pity. Was this the first funeral he had ever met in the way-side along with his disciples? Was this the first mourner he had ever noticed go weeping thus behind the dead? It may not have been so; yet never perhaps before had he seen a poor lone widowed mother shed such bitter tears over the death of an only son. The sight moves him at least to do what he had never done before. He goes up to the woman, and says to her "*Weep not.*" Wrapped up in her consuming grief, how surprised she must have been at being accosted in such a way at such a time. Does this stranger mean to mock her, to deal rudely with her in her grief? In any other she might have been ready to repel and resent the unseasonable intrusion—the strange

unreasonable speech; but there is something in the loving, pitying eye that looks at her as she glances at him timidly through her tears—something of hope, of promise, of assurance in the gentle yet authoritative tones of his voice that quenches all disposition to repel or resent. But why does Christ first say to her—Weep not? Does he not know what he is about to do? Does he not know that within a few minutes that will be done by him which, without any bidding on his part, will dry up all her tears? He does; but he cannot go forward to his great act without yielding to the impulse of pity; dropping into the ear of the mourner—not as a cold word of command, fitted only to give needless pain, but as a spontaneous expression of his warm personal compassion—the words, "Weep not." Such a preface to the miracle speaks to us as plainly of the tenderness of Christ's sympathy as the miracle itself proclaims the infinitude of his power.

"And he came and touched the bier, and they that bore him stood still." And all stand as still as the bearers; the two groups, the one from

Capernaum and the other from Nain, lost in wonder as to what is to happen next. All eyes turn upon Jesus. His turn upon the bier. The silence is broken by the simple majestic words, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." The young man rises, looks about with wonder, begins to speak. Jesus takes him by the hand, lifts him from the bier, delivers him to his mother. The deed of mercy is done, and nothing more is told, but that a great fear came upon all. "And they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people. And this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the region round about."

It was a few days or weeks before or after this incident (for the date is uncertain) that one of the rulers of the synagogue at Capernaum, Jairus by name, came to Jesus as he sat at meat in the house of Levi, and "cast himself at his feet, and worshipped him, and besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death; come and lay thy hands upon her, that she may be healed, and she shall live." Jesus arose at

once and went with Jairus; so did his disciples, and so did much people; the very promptness of Christ's compliance with the ruler's request stimulating their curiosity. The distance could not have been great from the house of Levi to that of Jairus, and might speedily have been traversed, but the crowd that thronged around Jesus by the way somewhat impeded the movement. It gave, however, to one poor woman the opportunity she had long been seeking. Twelve long years she had been a sufferer, her illness one that made her very touch pollution. All she had she had spent upon physicians. It seemed rather to have aggravated her complaint. Seeing or hearing about Jesus, a belief in the healing virtue that lay in him had taken possession of her mind. Her timidity, her sense of shame, kept her from going openly to him, telling him of her malady, and asking him to exert his power on her behalf. But if she could in any way unseen get at him, if she could but touch his clothes, she felt that she should be made whole. And now he goes through this great crowd. It is the very occasion she has been seeking for, and she seizes it: gets

behind him, presses through the people, and touches the hem of his outer garment. She is instantly healed, but as instantly arrested. The touch has scarce been given, the healing scarce effected, when Jesus turns round and says, "Who touched my clothes?" They all deny the deed. Peter expostulates with his Master. "The multitude," he says, "throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?" Jesus knows as well as Peter that many had been near enough for their and his garments to have come into contact; but he knows, too, as Peter knew not, that there had been a touch with a distinct, deliberate purpose, altogether different from that of a mere random contact, a touch that had drawn virtue out of him. Who gave it? His eye looked round to see, is already resting on the woman, who, seeing that she is not hid, fearing and trembling, yet glad and grateful, throws herself on her knees before him, and getting the better of all her womanly feelings, declares unto him "before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately."

Had Jesus been displeased at being touched? Had he grudged in any way that the virtue had in such a way been extracted? Was it to detect and rebuke a culprit that he had challenged the multitude? No: it was because he knew how very strong was this woman's faith,—a faith sufficient to draw out at once in fullest measure the healing efficacy, and yet a faith that had in it a superstitious element, the fancy that in some magical mysterious way contact of any kind established between her and Christ would cure her. If he allowed her to go away undetected, the healing filched, as it were, unconsciously from the healer, this fancy might be confirmed, the superstitious element in her faith enhanced. Therefore it was that he would not suffer the secrecy. He would meet and answer the faith which under the heavy pressure and in despair of all other help had thrown itself somewhat blindly yet confidingly upon his aid. But he will not allow her to depart without letting her know how wrong and how needless it had been in her to attempt concealment, without letting her and all around her know what was the kind

of touch that she had given which had established the right connexion between her and him, and opened the way for the remedy reaching the disease. "And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole, go in peace."

There is not one of all our Saviour's many miracles of healing fuller of comfort and encouragement. For if his mode of dealing with our spiritual diseases be shadowed out in the modes of the bodily cures that he effected, whenever we grow sad or despondent as we think how much of fear, or shame, or error, or weakness, or superstition mingles with the faith we cherish, then let us remember that if only the depth and inveteracy of the spiritual disease be felt, if with or without a long trial of them we have been led to despair of all other physicians of the soul, and to look alone to Jesus Christ, he who accepted this woman's faith with all its weakening and defiling ingredients, will not cast us off. A timid trembling touch of him, be it only the touch of humility and trust, will still bring forth that healing virtue which wraps itself up in no guarded seclu-

sion, but delights to pour itself freely out into every open and empty receptacle that is brought to it.

The stoppage by the way, however brief, must have been somewhat trying to Jairus, but he showed no impatience. There was a short delay, but with it a new proof of Christ's power well fitted to fortify his faith. But just as the healed woman is sent away, the messenger arrives, who says, "Thy daughter is dead, why troublest thou the Master any further?" The words were perhaps not meant for the ear of Christ, yet it caught them up, and the moment it did so, knowing and feeling to what a strain the faith of Jairus was exposed, and how much he needed to be assured and comforted, "as soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith to the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe." Jairus hears the reassuring words, and, heedless of the suggestion made, follows Jesus as before.

At last the house of the dead is reached. Jesus suffers none of his followers to enter with him save Peter, James, and John, the three privileged apostles who were with him on the mount

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of his transfiguration and in the garden of his agony, the three chosen witnesses of the highest exercise of his power, the fullest display of his glory, the greatest depth of his sorrow. The first apartment of the ruler's house is occupied with those who fill it with a perfect tumult of bemoaning sounds. It was the custom to hire such mourners on these occasions,—the more numerous, the more vehement, the higher the station of the family. The outward demonstration of grief that they here make is excessive, but there is no heart in all the sound and show, no true utterance of any real sorrow. As at discord at once with his own feeling and with his formed purpose, Jesus rebukes the wailers, and says to them, "Give place; why make ye this ado? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth." Not dead? Can they, the hired officials, not tell the difference between sleep and death? Who is he that speaks to them so slightingly, so authoritatively taking it on him, stranger though he be, to stop their lamentations? They "laugh him to scorn:" this real laughter still more incongruous with his presence and his purpose than the feigned grief.

With Jairus to second him, Jesus puts all the people out, takes "the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying." He takes the dead child by the hand, simply says, Talitha cumi—damsel, arise! and she rises, weak as from a bed of illness, yet with all the seeds of the mortal malady which had laid her low banished from her frame. Having directed that some food should be given her, Jesus straitly charged the parents that they should tell no man; an injunction, let us believe, that they did their best to keep, and yet St. Matthew tells us "the fame thereof went abroad into all that land."

It is difficult to understand why it was that Jesus laid such a stringent injunction of secrecy upon the parents in this instance. Had the widow's son not been raised from the dead about the same time, and in circumstances of the utmost publicity, we might have imagined that there was a desire on the part of Christ to throw, for a time at least, a veil over this particular form of the manifestation of his power. But though that other miracle had not been wrought, had this one

stood alone, how could it be hidden? There were too many that had seen the damsel die, or mourned over her when dead, to allow of any concealment. As we think of the difficulty, we might almost say impossibility of such concealment, the thought occurs (and other instances in which the same command was given by Christ may in the same way be explained) that it was not so much with any desire or intention to secure secrecy that the order was issued, as to prevent those who had the closest personal interest in the miracle being the first or the loudest in noising it abroad.

There does not seem to have been any previous acquaintance between Christ and the widow of Nain. It may be doubted whether she had ever seen Jesus till she met him as she was going out to bury her son. We do not read of Jesus ever being in Nain but on that one occasion. It lay beyond the line of those circuits of Galilee which he was in the habit of making. We are not surprised, therefore, at noticing that his interference there was voluntary, without any solicitation or hope entertained beforehand on the part

of the mourner. It was different with Jairus at Capernaum. He was a well-known man, living in the town which Jesus had chosen as his head-quarters in Galilee. In all likelihood he was one of the rulers of the Jews who formed the deputation that a short time before had waited on Jesus to ask his aid on behalf of the Roman centurion. It was quite natural that, when his "one only daughter" lay a-dying, he should apply on her account to Christ. But there may have been in his character and connexions something of which we are ignorant, which made it undesirable that he should be forward in proclaiming what had happened in his house.

It was a case of recovery from the dead, about which there might be some cavilling. The child could have been but a short time dead; long enough, indeed, to establish the certainty of the event, yet not so long as to hinder any one from saying that it was literally and not figuratively true, "She is not dead, but sleepeth." In this respect we notice a difference, a progression in the three instances of raising from the dead recorded by the Evangelists—that of Jairus's

daughter, of the widow's son, and of Lazarus. It is not distinctly said to be so; but we presume that these were the only three cases in which the dead were restored to life by Christ. The one was soon after death, the other immediately before burial, the third after the dead man had lain four days in the grave—the variety of the period after death at which the restoration was in each case effected not, perhaps, without a purpose. For these three great miracles stand, in one respect, at the head of all our Lord's works of wonder. They were the highest instances of the forth-putting of his divine almighty power. With respect to many of his other works, questions might be raised as to the nature or extent of the power required for their performance, but none as to these. Life in all its forms, from the highest to the lowest, is that mysterious thing which, when once destroyed, none but the Creator—the great Life-giver—can restore. Were a dead man actually revivified before our eyes, we could not doubt that the power of the Omnipotent had gone forth to do it. In no case did Jesus Christ so conspicuously and undoubtedly show himself to

be clothed with that power as when he raised the dead. The power, indeed, by which he wrought such miracles might not have been naturally his own. It might have been a delegated power, given him for the time, not permanently belonging to him. He might have raised the dead as Elijah raised the son of the widow at Zarephath, as Elisha did the son of the Shunamite. Had it been so, we should have had some evidence thereof—some appeal on the part of the mere human agent to the great Being whose power was for the moment lent and exercised. It was with trouble and with pain, after much and earnest prayer, that Elijah and Elisha, the only raisers of the dead in all the preceding ages, had succeeded. No one who saw or heard them could have imagined that they claimed any natural or inherent power of their own over the dead to call them back to life. They would themselves have counted it as the greatest insult to Jehovah to do so. How is it in this respect with Jesus Christ? Stand beside him as he calls the dead to life. Look at the manner of his acting, listen to the words that he employs. Is

it as a servant, the delegate of another, that he speaks and acts? Is it with any consciousness on his part, felt or exhibited, that he was rising above the level at which he ordinarily stood, that he was then doing something which he had been specially commissioned and supernaturally qualified to accomplish? Surely there is nothing more remarkable about these raisings from the dead by Jesus Christ than the simple, easy, unostentatious way in which they were effected. "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise"—"Maid, arise"—"Lazarus, come forth." He speaks thus to the dead, and they hear and live. It is in the style of him who said, Let there be light, and there was light. It is the Lord of the living and of the dead whose voice penetrates the unseen world, and summons the departed spirit to resume its mortal tenement.

But if, as to the power he wields, Jesus never presents himself to our eye in a diviner, never does he show himself in a more human aspect than in these raisings from the dead. Can we overlook the fact that they were those of the only son of a widowed mother, the only daughter,

if not the only child, of two fond parents, the only brother of two affectionate sisters—of those whose loss in their respective homesteads would be so deeply felt, of those whose restoration quickened so acute a grief into such an ecstatic joy? And in each case there was something quite singular in the tenderness of our Lord's conduct towards the mourners. He knew beforehand how speedily the anxiety that he witnessed would be relieved, all the sorrow chased away; but the "weep not" to the mother before he touched the bier, the "fear not, only believe," to the agitated father, the tears that fell before the grave of Lazarus, what a testimony do they bear to the exquisite susceptibility of the Saviour's spirit—to the quickness, the fulness, the liveliness of his sympathy with human grief. It is even then, when he is most divine, that he is most human—when he lifts himself the highest above our level that he links himself the closest to us as a true brother of our humanity. Such power to help, such readiness and capacity to sympathize, meet but in one Being.

Many passages of the New Testament might be

quoted which assign it as one of the reasons of the Incarnation that there might be such a Being, one compassed about with infirmities, one touched with a fellow-feeling with our infirmities, one tempted in all things like as we are, a merciful as well as a faithful, a compassionate as well as an all-powerful, all-prevalent High Priest over the House of God. The great Son of God, when he stooped to become a man, did not become thereby more merciful, more kind, more compassionate than he had been; yet are we not warranted to believe that a human element was introduced and infused into them which otherwise the mercy, kindness, compassion should not have possessed? If the Manhood was a gainer by bringing it into close, mysterious union with the Divinity, was there no gain to the Divinity by the Incarnation?—not, of course, a gain absolutely, not a gain as to any original, essential faculty or attribute of the Supreme, but a gain as to the bringing of the Divine Being into closer and more sympathetic fellowship with man? We all know how difficult it is, whatever be the natural capacity and large-

ness of our pity, to sympathize fully and tenderly with a kind of trial we have never felt. Those who have never wept over any dead they loved, can they enter into the grief of the bereaved? And how could we, but by the Incarnation, have had one who could enter as Jesus can into all our sorrows?

Why was such a sympathy as his provided for us, but that as sinners as well as sufferers we might cast ourselves upon it for support? Jesus is the great raiser of human souls as well as of human bodies. He quickeneth whom he will. The hour has come when all that are in the grave of sin, of spiritual death, may hear his voice. That voice is sounding all around us as in the ears of the dead. Awake, it says to each of us—awake, thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life. Let us awake, and with life new-given turn to the Life-giver; rejoicing to know that as tenderly as he handed her new-raised son to the widow of Nain, as tenderly as he ordered the food to be given to the little daughter of Jairus, as tenderly will he watch over the first stages of our spiritual being;

and that as fully as the griefs of widowed mother and weeping parents were shared in of old by Him in Galilee, so fully will he share in all the griefs of our earthly history, till he take us to the land where his own gracious hand shall wipe off the tears from every eye, and we shall no more need another to weep with us in our sorrows.

VI.

THE EMBASSY OF THE BAPTIST—THE GREAT INVITATION.[1]

OUR Lord's public ministry in Galilee began at the time that John had been cast into prison, and had now continued for more than half-a-year. There was much in this ministry which those disciples of the Baptist who kept aloof from Jesus could not comprehend. There was the entire absence of that ascetic rigour and stern denunciation of all iniquity, by which their Master's character and teaching had been distinguished. There were no fastings, no prescribed repeated prayers, there was the call of a publican to be an apostle, there was the eating and drinking with publicans and sinners. All this appeared to them not only different from, but inconsistent

[1] Matt. xi.

with, the idea of that kingdom, of whose advent their Master had announced himself as the herald. Some of them carried their doubts and difficulties to John himself in the prison. Hearing from them of the works of Christ, the Baptist sent two of their number to Jesus, and bade them put to him the question, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" As coming from John himself, and meant for his personal satisfaction, the question certainly would imply that some temporary misgiving had crept into the Baptist's mind. It is somewhat difficult to believe, after the revelations made to him, after what he had seen and heard at the baptism, after his own repeated public proclamations of it, that his faith in the Messiahship of Jesus had been shaken. His long and unexpected imprisonment, however, must have severely tried his faith. To such a man, from infancy a child of the desert, who had roamed with such free footstep through the wilderness of Engedi, who, when the time came for his manifestation to Israel, had but exchanged the freedom of his mountain solitudes for those liberties of speech and action he took

with his fellow-countrymen, the months of his imprisonment must have moved slowly and drearily along, turning even his strength into weakness. The chilly damp of being hurried unexpectedly from Herod's presence and his former open active life into the cheerless, idle solitude of the prison, fell all the chillier upon his heart on his coming to know that Jesus had been apprised of his imprisonment, and that yet no message of sympathy had been sent, that no movement for his deliverance was made. His notions of the coming kingdom may not have been different from those entertained at the time by the apostles and other followers of Christ. Perhaps he fancied that at the setting-up of this kingdom all injustice, and oppression, and spiritual wickedness in high places was to be done away, the axe to be laid at their root, the fan to be so used as thoroughly to purge the threshing-floor. Perhaps, in rebuking Herod as he did, he thought that it was but a first blow dealt at that which the mightier than he who was to come after him was wholly to destroy. And when, instead of his expectations being fulfilled, he was

left unvisited, uncheered, unhelped; and he heard of the course which Jesus was pursuing, gathering crowds indeed around him, but carefully abstaining from announcing himself as the Messiah, or doing anything towards the erection of a new kingdom, —in some season of disquietude and despondency, perplexed and a little impatient, sharing their feelings, and in the hope of at once relieving their doubts and removing his own misgivings, he sent two of his disciples to put to him a question which might be the means of drawing from Jesus a public declaration of his Messiahship, and of inducing him openly to inaugurate the new kingdom.[1]

The messengers arrived and delivered their message at a very opportune conjuncture. "In the same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight."[2] Jesus kept

[1] Many think that it was for the sake of his disciples, and for their sakes alone, that the Baptist sent them on this errand, not that he had any doubts himself, but that he knew they had. It is altogether likely that he had some regard to their establishment in a true faith in Christ. The question, however, put into their lips comes too directly from himself, and the answer is directed too plainly and pointedly to him, to allow us to shut out the idea of personal relief and satisfaction being contemplated.

[2] Luke vii. 21.

John's messengers for a season near him instead of answering them, going on with his healing work. He then turned to them and said, "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the Gospel is preached." It is not simply to the miracles as displays of superhuman power that Jesus appeals; it is to their kind and character, as peculiarly and prophetically Messianic. Jesus had, hitherto, refrained from assuming the title of the Messiah, or announcing himself as such. John by his messengers urges him to do so. Christ contents himself with simply pointing to such works done by him as the Baptist could not fail to recognise as a fulfilment of those prophecies of Isaiah, in which the days and doings of the Messiah were described. Nor can we fail to notice that, side by side with the greatest of the miracles, reserved as the closing crowning testimony to the Messiahship, is the fact that to the poor the Gospel was preached; to the poor as well as to rich, to no favoured people, class, or section of mankind, to

all in that universal character which all sustain as sinful, responsible, immortal. The words that Jesus added, "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me," may have carried with them a special allusion to the Baptist, while proclaiming the blessedness of the man who was not offended at the patience and gentleness of Jesus, his readiness to wait and to suffer, to invite and encourage, rather than to denounce and to punish.

Having given them what seemed a sufficient answer, Jesus sent John's messengers away. He had something more, however, to say to the people that was not for the Baptist's ear; which must not be said till the messengers were gone. What they had just seen and heard was fitted to create an unfavourable impression, as if the faith, or fortitude, or patience of John had utterly given way. Eager to shield the character of his forerunner, Jesus turned to the multitude and said to them concerning John, "What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?" a man bowing and bending as the reed does before every passing breeze, a man fickle of purpose, changeable in faith, believing at Betha-

bara, disbelieving now at Machærus? Not such a man is John; rock-like, not reed-like—such as he was in the wilderness, such is he in Herod's keep. "What went ye out to see? A man clothed in soft raiment?" caring for the comforts and luxuries of life, or a man who, all negligent as he had been of these before, feels now the hair-cloth to be too hard a garment, and would fain exchange it for a softer one? Not such a man is John. The wearers and lovers of soft raiment you will find in palaces, not in prisons. John cares as little for such raiment now as when of his own free will he chose the hair-cloth as his garment. "But what went ye out to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet." The only one among all the prophets whose course and office were themselves the subjects of prophecy; whose birth, like that of his Great Master, an angel was commissioned to announce; his predecessors seeing but from afar across the breadth of intervening centuries, he, the friend of the bridegroom, standing by the bridegroom's side, his office such towards Christ as to elevate him to a height above any ever

reached before, yet this kind of greatness, one springing from position and office, as local, external, temporary, not once to be mentioned alongside of that other kind of greatness which is moral, spiritual, intrinsic, eternal. "For this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist; notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

More than one public testimony had been borne by John to Jesus. Jesus answers these by the witness he thus bears to John. But as he thinks of himself in conjunction with the Baptist, the strange and inconsistent treatment that they respectively had met with from the men of that generation presents itself to his thoughts.[1] It is but seldom that anything like criticism or complaint touching those around him comes from the lips of Jesus. All the more interesting is the glance that he here casts, the judgment that he

[1] Matt. xi. 16-19.

here pronounces, upon the men of his own age and nation. Addressed by two different voices, speaking in two different tones, they had turned a deaf ear to both. The rigour of the law came to them in the message of the Baptist; they took offence at it. The gentleness and love of the Gospel came to them in the message of Jesus; they took equal offence at it; justifying in either case their conduct by fixing on something in the character or lives of each of the two messengers which they turned into matter of complaint and accusation; guilty of great unfairness in doing so, exhibiting the grossest inconsistency, charging opposite excesses upon John and upon Jesus, saying of the one that he was too austere and ascetic, that he had a devil—saying of the other that he was too free and social, that he was a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, the friend of publicans and sinners. Had it been any other two of Heaven's chosen messengers that they had to deal with, they might have had less difficulty in fixing on some irregularity or eccentricity of conduct out of which to fashion the shelter they sought to construct. But that even with them they tried this

expedient, and imagined that they had succeeded, only shows to what lengths that principle or tendency of our nature will go which seeks to mix up the claims of religion with the character of its advocates.

But now the Saviour's thoughts pass onward from the contemplation of that folly and inconsistency which a familiar similitude borrowed from the market-place may expose, to dwell more profoundly upon the conduct of those cities wherein most of his mighty works were done. In endeavouring to follow and fathom from this point onwards the train of our Lord's reflections, as recorded by the Evangelist, we enter a region remote and very elevated. "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day." Who is he who announces so confidently what

certain communities would have done had they been placed in other circumstances than those in which they actually stood, and what altered outward destiny would have followed the different course pursued! "It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon and for the land of Sodom at the day of judgment than for you." Who is he who anticipates the verdicts of eternity, pronouncing so confidently upon the greater and the lesser guilt, fore-announcing the lightier and the heavier doom?

But now, before the eye of the man Christ Jesus, there spreads out a section of the great mystery that hangs over this world's spiritual history. Here are men—these inhabitants of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum—involved in all the greater guilt, incurring all the heavier doom, in consequence of the presence of Jesus in the midst of them. There were men—those inhabitants of Sodom, and Tyre, and Sidon, who, had they lived in an after-age and enjoyed the privileges bestowed upon the others, would have repented and shared in all the blessings of the heavenly kingdom. How many questions, as we

stand in front of facts like these, press upon our thoughts and rise to our trembling lips—questions touching the principles and procedure of the Divine government as affecting the future and eternal destinies of our race—questions we cannot answer, that it pains and perplexes us to the uttermost even to entertain? It is in this very region that there comes one of the greatest trials of our faith. Was there no trial of the like kind for the man Christ Jesus, as he, too, stood gazing down into these depths? In what way or to what extent the human spirit of our Lord lay open to that burden and pressure which a contemplation of the sins and sufferings here and hereafter of so many of our fellow-creatures brings down upon every thoughtful spirit that has any of the tenderness of humanity in it, it is not for us to determine. But that he who was tempted in all things like as we are did at this time feel something of this burden and pressure, seems clear from the attitude into which he immediately throws himself. "At that time"—when thought was hovering over this dark and awful region—Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven. Some light

has broken in upon that darkness from above, drawing his eyes upwards to its source. Some voice from above has spoken, that comes, as his own came upon the troubled waters of the lake, to still the inward agitation of his thoughts. "Jesus answered and said, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth!" Infinitely wise, infinitely merciful, infinitely loving Father, thou art Lord of heaven and earth. The past has all been ordered—the future will be all arranged, by thee, and in thy character and purposes and providence over all as at once the Father and the Judge, the solution lies of all that to created eyes may seem obscure. "I thank thee . . . that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Why are the things that belong to their eternal peace hidden from some and revealed to others, hidden from so many, revealed to comparatively so few? One beam of light falls upon the darkness here, and for it the thanks are given.

It is not an arbitrary distinction, drawn by a capricious hand that loves to show its power. The fate of Sodom, Tyre, and Sidon was not one

that it was impossible for them to have evaded, that nothing could have turned aside. They might have repented, and had they repented, the ruin had not come. A thick cloud, charged with bolts of vengeance, hung over Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum because of their unbelief. All over the land it was but one of a family, or two of a city, who had welcomed the Saviour and his message. The right interpretation of all this was not given by saying that it was by a divine decree that had no regard to the character and conduct of each, that the eyes of some were blinded and the eyes of others opened to the heavenly light. It was from the wise and prudent, who thought themselves so much wiser or better than others, whose pride it was that blinded them, that the Gospel was hidden. It was to the babes, to the humble, the meek, the teachable, that it had been revealed. And it is not so much for the hiding it from the one as for the revealing it to the other that Jesus here gave thanks. On two after occasions of his life he had each of the two alternatives—the hiding and the revealing, separately and exclusively before him, and the

difference of the emotions felt and expressed by him marked the difference of their effects upon his mind and heart. Would we know what impression the revealing made, let us plant ourselves by his side as the seventy return from their brief but successful mission, and tell him of the results; when without a shadow on his joy, he rejoices in spirit, and repeats in words the very thanksgiving that he now offered. Would we know what impression the hiding made, let us plant ourselves beside him as he beheld the city and wept over it, exclaiming, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

But is it a full solution of the mystery that those left in darkness have themselves, by their wilfulness, and pride, and carnality, created a medium through which the heavenly light cannot pass? Why is it, if the spirits of all men are equally and absolutely beneath the control of the Creator, that any are suffered to remain in such condition? There is no answer to such a question,

for, take up the great enigma of the doings of God and the destinies of man at what end you may, approach it from what quarter you please, adopt whatever method of solution you may prefer, make your way through the difficulties that beset you as far as you can, sooner or later you reach the point where explanation fails, and where there is nothing left for us but to join with him who said, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

The occasion now before us may have been the first in which Jesus was seen and heard in the act of prayer. The stopping of the current of his address to them by the offering up of a short and solemn thanksgiving to his Father in heaven must have made a deep impression on the multitude. It was singularly fitted to excite wonder and awe, and to lead them to inquire what the peculiar relationship was in which Jesus stood to the Great Being whom he so addressed. Was it not as one reading their thoughts and graciously condescending to unfold so much of the mystery of his Sonship to the Father, that Jesus went on to say, "All things are delivered unto me of my

Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father, . . . and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." The Baptist, in his closing testimony to Jesus, had declared, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." Jesus now takes up and appropriates this testimony. With special reference, we may believe, to the things hidden and revealed of which he had been speaking, he says:—All things—all those things concerning man's relationship to God, and his condition here and hereafter, have not simply been revealed, but been delivered to me,—handed over for adjustment, for discovery to and bestowal upon men; and chiefly that of the true knowledge of God. Intimate and complete is the mutual knowledge which the Father and the Son have of one another, a knowledge in kind and in degree incommunicable. It is the Father alone who knoweth who the Son is; the Son alone who knoweth who the Father is. "As the Father knoweth me," said Jesus, "even so know I the Father."[1] Finite may measure finite, like comprehend its like, man know what is in man,

[1] John x. 15.

but here it is Infinite embracing Infinite, the Divine Son and the Divine Father compassing and fathoming the Divine Nature, and the Divine attributes belonging equally to both.

And yet there is a knowledge of the Father to which man may reach, yet reach only by receiving it through the Son. Had we been told simply that no man knoweth the Father but the Son, nor the Son but the Father, we should not have known to which of the two we were to look for any such acquaintance with either or both as our finite minds are capable of attaining; but when Jesus says "no man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him," he announces himself to us as the sole revealer of the Father; this no small or secondary part of his gracious office, to make God clearly known to us as our Father which is in heaven. To some obscure and partial knowledge of the Supreme Being as Creator, Upholder, Sovereign, Governor, we may attain without help of this revelation of him by Christ; but if we would know him in his living personality, know him as a God not afar off but near at hand, know

him in all the richness and fulness of his mercy and love, know him as a pitying, forgiving, protecting, providing, comforting, reconciled Father, we must get at that knowledge through Christ, we must see him as the Son reveals him. No man knoweth thus the Father, but he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

But who is he to whom this revelation of the Father is offered? Let the broad unrestricted invitation with which the statement of the Saviour is immediately succeeded supply the answer:—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This invitation loses half its meaning, taken out of the connexion in which it was spoken. We understand and appreciate the fulness and richness of its significance only by looking upon it as grounded on and flowing out of what Christ had the moment before been saying. At first sight it might seem as if there was something like confinement and contraction in the preceding utterances of Jesus. He claims all things as committed to him. Otherwise than through him nothing can come to us. He tells

us that for all true knowledge of the Father we must be indebted exclusively to him. As to our knowing and receiving, does this not seem to narrow the channel of their conveyance? Yes, as this channel lies outside our earth, spanning the mysterious distance between it and heaven; but watch as this channel touches the earth and spreads out its waters on every side, then see how all narrowness and contraction disappears. "All things are delivered unto me of my Father." But why so delivered, why put so exclusively into his hand? Simply and solely that they might so easily, so freely, so fully come unto ours. For us to go elsewhere than to him, to expect that otherwise than through him we are to receive anything, is to resist and repudiate this ordinance of the Father. But he has all, he holds all as the Treasurer of the Kingdom, the Steward of the Divine Mercies, the sinner's divinely constituted Trustee, and he has all and holds all under the condition that there shall be the freest, most unrestricted, most gracious dispensing of all the treasures committed to his custody, that whoever asks shall get, that

no needy one shall ever come to him and be sent unrelieved away. "No man knoweth the Father but he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." But does he niggardly withhold that revelation, or restrict it to a few? No; wide as the world is, of all who seek to know the Father that knowing him they may have peace, so wide is the unlimited invitation spread. In many a sublime attractive position do we see Jesus standing while executing his gracious office here on earth—in none loftier or more divine than when placing himself in the centre of the wide circle of humanity, and, looking round upon the millions of our race,—labourers to weariness, —with this or that other burden pressing them to the earth, with the full consciousness of one who has the power to relieve all who come, he says:—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Rest, —this is what our inward nature most deeply needs; for everywhere, in every region of it—in our intellect, our conscience, our affections, our will—the spirit of unrest, like a possessing demon, haunts us with its disturbing presence. Then

let us see how Christ would have us bring these vexed souls of ours to him, that from every such haunted region of it he may cast the vexing demon out.

Our intellect, in its search after God, is in unrest, re-echoing the ancient plaint, "Oh that I knew where I might find him! . . . Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him." There dawns upon us the sublime idea of a Being infinitely wise, and just, and good, author of all and orderer of all, but through the clouds and darkness with which his guidance and government of this world is so densely swathed we begin to lose sight of him. Looking at him as revealed alone in the ways of his Providence, we get perplexed as we look around upon a world in which such oppressions, wrongs, injustices are done, where might so often triumphs over right, where sin and misery so fearfully abound, where death comes in to close the short-lived, chequered scene of every earthly life.

Faith begins to lose its footing, now believing and now doubting, now all things clear, now all things clouded, restlessly we are tossed as on a troubled sea. What we want is some firm ground for our faith in God to rest on. Jesus Christ supplies that ground in revealing this God to us as our Father, in telling us that such as he himself was, in love and pity and care and help to all around him, such is the God and Father of us all to the whole human family. In our anxiety to get one true clear sight of that Great Being whose doings we contemplate with such a mixture of awe and of uncertainty, we are ready with Philip to say:—"Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." The answer comes from the lips of Jesus, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." It is a Father of whose love we have the earthly image in the love of Christ, who rules the world we live in. Can we doubt any longer that wisdom, mercy, justice, and love shall direct the whole train of the administration of human affairs, the whole treatment of each individual of our race?

There is unrest in the conscience. A wounded conscience who can bear? The sense of guilt as it rises within the breast who can quench? The dark forebodings that it generates who can clear away? Men tell us our fears are idle; we try to believe them, and put our foot upon those fears to tread them down, but they spring up afresh beneath our tread. They tell us that God is too merciful—too kind to punish. We try to believe them, knowing that God is a thousandfold milder, more merciful than thought of ours can conceive; but we have only to look within and around us upon the sufferings that sin inflicts, and the vision of a Divinity that does not, will not punish, vanishes like a dream of the night. Where then can our conscience-troubled spirits find repose, where but in him who hath taken our sin upon him, in whom there is redemption for us through his blood, even the forgiveness of all our sins? If we may go to Christ for anything, it is for this forgiveness. If we may trust him in anything, it is in the bestowal of this gift. If among the things that have been delivered unto him of the Father, there be one that more

clearly and conspicuously than another is held out to be taken at once from his most gracious hand, it is the pardon, the peace, the reconciliation with God, offered to us in him. If we put these aside, or will not take them as the fruits of our Lord's passion, death, and righteousness, purchased for us at that great cost to him, gratuitously bestowed on us, then if the higher instincts of our moral and spiritual nature become in any degree quickened, what a weary, toilsome, fruitless task do they set us to execute! These instincts tell us that we are the creatures of another's hand, the dependants on another's bounty, the subjects of another's rule, that to him our first duties are owing, that against him our greatest offences have been committed, that to stand well with him is the first necessity of our being. How then shall we remedy the evil of our past ingratitude and disobedience, how shall we bring things right and keep things right between us and God? Oh! if all the anxious thought, and weary labours, the prayers, the pains, the self-restraints, the self-mortifications, the offerings at all the altars, the giving to all the priests, the sacrifices—

personal, domestic, social, of affections, of property, of life—that have been made by mankind to turn away the apprehended wrath of Heaven, and to work themselves into something like favour with the powers of the invisible world;—if they could be all brought together and heaped up in one great mass before us, what a mountain-pile of toil and suffering would they exhibit, what a gigantic monument to the sense of sin, the power of conscience in the human heart! With a most mournful eye we look upon that pile as we remember that it has been heaped up needlessly and in vain, that all that was wanted was the ceasing on the part of those engaged in it from the effort to establish a righteousness of their own before God, the ceasing to revert to any such methods to ward off the displeasure or to win the favour of the Most High, the ceasing to repair to such harbours of refuge as churches, altars and priests: and the opening simply of the ear to the words of Jesus, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

There is unrest in our affections. Here they

foolishly wander, there they bitterly are checked, at times dammed up by manifold obstructions, at times running wildly to waste, ever seeking, never finding full allowed complacent rest. And why? Because nowhere here on earth can a being or object be found on which we can safely, innocently, abidingly lavish the whole wealth of that affection which the heart contains. For the right placing, the full outdrawing, the perfect and the permanent repose of the heart, we want one to love—above us, so that reverence may mingle with esteem; like us, so that closely and familiarly we may embrace—one in whom all conceivable excellences meet and centre, all that the eye covets to admire, that the heart asks to love. We seek for such an one in vain till we hear Jesus saying, Come unto me, and *I* will give you rest. We go, and all, and more than all, we asked for, could think of, we find in him. Grace and truth blended in perfect harmony, a beauty undimmed by a single blemish, a sympathy constant and entire, a love eternal, unchangeable, which nothing can quench, from which nothing can separate. Here at last, and here only, do we find one wish-

ing to be loved and worthy to be loved with the full devotion of the heart. Restless till it lights on him, with what a warm embrace when it finds him does the heart of faith clasp Jesus to its bosom! "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?"—may the watchmen of the city say. The answer is at hand: "My beloved is the chief among ten thousand, he is altogether lovely. I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine—my Lord, my God, my Shepherd, Saviour, Kinsman, Brother, Friend."

There is unrest in the will. It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. It aims at, it attempts independence. We would be our own masters, we will not have another to reign over us; and so, instead of the quiet of a settled order, there is confusion and anarchy within. All, indeed, is not left absolutely loose, unreined, unregulated. A yoke of some kind we all are born under, or willingly take on. Some assume the yoke of a single passion of their nature, and if that passion be a strong one, such as covetousness, it is not long ere it turns the man into a slave, making him a mere beast of

burden—time for nothing, care for nothing, taste for nothing, joy in nothing but in working for it and under it. And the more work done for it, the more does it impose—its day of labour without any quiet evening tide, its week without a Sabbath. Nor does it mend the matter much if instead of one there be many such yokes about the neck, jostling one another, fretting and galling the wearer by the force and variety of the impulses that drive him in this direction and in that. It is to all mankind as bearers of the one yoke, or the many, that Jesus says—"Take up my yoke, throw off these others, the yoke of pride, of covetousness, of sensuality, of worldliness, of ambition, of self-indulgence—take on that yoke, which consists in devotedness to me, to duty, in a life of self-restraint, in a struggle with all that is evil, a cultivation of all that is beautiful, and good, and holy. A hard yoke you may think this to be, but believe me, my yoke is easy, my burden is light, easier and lighter far than those you are groaning under."

One great reason why we are unconscious of the comparative lightness and easiness of this

yoke of the Christian discipleship is that we take it on in the spirit of fear, and of a selfish mercenary hope, instead of with that trust and love and gratitude which are the soft wrappings which, laid beneath it, make it so easy to be borne. It is as those who have been redeemed to God by Christ's most precious blood, whose sins have been all forgiven them for Jesus' sake, whose peace has been made with God through him; it is in the spirit of child-like confidence, looking up to God as our Father in heaven, and to himself as having ready in his hand for us the grace and strength we need, that Jesus would have us meet every duty, face every temptation, endure every trial, of the Christian life. But if instead of this it be with a doubtful mind and a divided heart that we put forth the hand to take on the yoke—if we do this, not so much to render a return for a great benefit already received, as to add to our chance of receiving that benefit hereafter—if it be for peace and not from peace, for life and not from life that we are working—what is this but trying without throwing it off to shift the old yoke of self a little, to loosen some of its fastenings, and

by their help try to attach to us the new yoke of Christ? Is it wonderful that, encumbered thus, there should be little freedom of motion, little capacity for, and little enjoyment of, the work of faith and labour of love? If we desire to know how truly easy the yoke of Jesus is, let us first enter into the rest that at once and in full measure he gives to all who come to him—the rest of forgiveness, peace, acceptance with God. And then, animated and strengthened by the possession and enjoyment of this rest, let us assume the yoke, that in the bearing of it we may enter into the further rest that there is for us in him—the rest of a meek and lowly heart, gentle, resigned, contented, patient of wrong, submissive under suffering, a rest not given at once or in full measure to any; to possess which we must be ready to enter into the spirit of the following verses:—

"Fain would I my Lord pursue,
Be all my Saviour taught;
Do as Jesus bade me do,
And think as Jesus thought.
But 'tis Thou must change my heart,
The perfect gift must come from Thee;
Meek Redeemer, now impart
Thine own humility.

Lord, I cannot, must not rest
Till I thy mind obtain;
Chase presumption from my breast,
And all thy mildness gain.
Give me, Lord, thy gentle heart,
Thy lowly mind my portion be;
Meek Redeemer, now impart
Thine own humility."

VII.

THE WOMAN WHO WAS A SINNER.[1]

COMING as it does in the narrative of St. Luke (the only evangelist who records it) immediately after that discourse which closed with the invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," how natural the thought that here, in what is told us about the woman who was a sinner, we have one instance—perhaps the first that followed its delivery—of that invitation being accepted,—of one wearied and heavy laden coming to Jesus, and entering into the promised rest. Multitudes had already come to him to get their bodily ailments cured: she may have been the first who came under the pressure of a purely spiritual impulse

[1] Luke vii. 36-50.

—grieving, desiring, hoping, loving, to get all and more than all she sought.

Jesus has accepted the invitation of a Pharisee, and reclines, leaning upon his left arm, his head towards the table, his unsandalled feet stretched outwards. Through the crowd of guests, and servants, and spectators, a woman well known in the city for the profligate life she had been leading, glides nearer and nearer, till she stands behind him. As she stands she weeps. The tears fall thickly upon his feet. She has nothing else with which to do it, so she stoops and wipes the tears away with her loose dishevelled hair. She gently grasps the feet of Jesus to kiss them, and now she remembers the box she had brought, in hope, perhaps, to find some fitting opportunity of pouring its contents upon his head; but she can make no nearer approach, and so she sheds the precious perfumed ointment on those feet which she had washed with her tears, wiped with the hairs of her head, and covered with the kisses of her lips.

What has brought this woman here? what moves her to act in this way to Jesus? Some-

where, somehow Jesus had recently crossed her path. She had heard his calls to repentance, his offers of forgiveness, his promises of peace and rest. The arrow had entered into her soul. She stood ashamed and confounded. Her iniquities took hold of her so that she was not able to look up, yet deep within her heart new hopes were rising, dimly before her eye new prospects dawned. All the penitence she experienced, all the new desires, expectations, resolutions, that were filling her breast she owed to him—to the gentle and loving yet resolute and truthful spirit in which Jesus had spoken. She had looked at him, had listened to him, had followed him as he opened those arms of his mercy so widely, and invited all to come to him. And what he so fully offered —the peace of forgiveness, the blessedness of meekness and lowliness, of poverty of spirit, purity of heart—these are what she now, above all things, desired to have. Believing that she can get them alone from him, an irresistible attraction draws her to him. Jewish women were wont to honour, by one or other mark of favour shown, the Rabbi or teacher to whom they

felt most attached or indebted. But what shall she render unto One who has already quickened her to a new life of hope and love? She hears of his going to dine with the Pharisee. Too well she knows how this man and his guests will look upon her, what an act of effrontery on her part it will appear that she should obtrude her presence into such a dwelling at such a time. But faith makes her bold, love triumphs over fear. She presses in and on, till at last she finds herself bending over the feet of Jesus, with the costliest thing she has, the alabaster box of ointment, in her hand. As she stands behind that form, as she stoops to embrace those feet, all the thoughtlessness, the recklessness, the unrestrained self-indulgence of by-past years, the ties she had broken, the injuries she had done, the reproaches she had incurred, the sins that she had committed, flash upon her memory. Who is she, that she should come so near and touch so familiarly the pure and the holy Jesus? She cannot meet his eye, she does not press herself upon his notice. But is he not the meek and compassionate, as well as the pure and the holy One? While

others had frowned upon her, avoided her, discarded her, treated her as an outcast, had he not shown a deep and tender interest in her, a yearning over her to take her in his hand and lead her back to the paths of purity and peace? It was this kindly treatment that had broken down all power to resist upon her part, which had given him such a hold of her, which had brought her to the house of the Pharisee to see him, which had drawn her so close to him. But the very thought of all the love and pity that he had shown to her and to all sinners open afresh the fountains of shame and self-reproach, and the tears of a true and deep repentance flow forth; not the tears of bare self-condemnation—a stinging remorse goading the spirit to despair. Along with a true sense of her sin there is an apprehension of the Divine mercy—that mercy revealed to her in Jesus. She sorrows not over her sins as one who has no hope: a trust in Christ's readiness and power to pardon and to save her has already entered into her heart. The very sense, however, of his exceeding graciousness quickens the sense of her exceeding sinfulness. The faith and hope

to which she has been begotten intensify her penitence, and that penitence intensifies her love; so that as we look upon her—first standing silently weeping, then bending down and bathing those feet with her tears, then clasping and kissing them and pouring the rich ointment over them—she presents herself to our eye as the most striking picture of a loving, humble penitent at the feet of Jesus which the Gospels present.

It was with a very different sentiment from that with which we are disposed to look at her that she was looked at by the Pharisee who presided at the feast. He had noticed her entrance, watched her movements, seen that, though not turning round to speak to her, Jesus was not unconscious of her presence, was permitting her to wash and wipe and anoint his feet. For the woman he has nothing but indignation and contempt. He thinks only of what she had been, not of what she is; and his only wonder as to her is, how she could have presumed to enter here and act as she has been doing. But he wonders, also, at Jesus. He cannot be the pro-

phet that so many take him to be, or he would have known what kind of woman this was; for he could not have known that and yet allowed himself to be defiled with her touch. Whatever respect he had been prepared to show to Jesus begins to suffer loss, as he sees him allowing such familiarities to be practised by such hands. Not that this respect had ever been very spiritual or very profound. The omissions that our Lord notices—notices not so much in the way of complaint as for the purpose of bringing out the contrast between the treatment given by the two—Simon and the woman—would seem rather to imply that he had not been careful to show any particular regard to his guest. Perhaps he thought that he was paying such a compliment to Jesus in inviting him to his house that he need be the less attentive to the courtesies of his reception. It was a rare thing for a man like him—a Pharisee—to do such a thing. Simon, however, was not one of the strict and rigid, the religious devotees of his order; he was more a moralist than a pietist; and seeing much in Jesus to approve, and even admire, he was quite ready to ask him

to his house, in the hope, perhaps, that in the easy freedom of social intercourse he might test the pretensions of this new teacher and see further than others into his true character and claims. One mark or token of his order is deeply stamped upon this Simon—pride,—a pride, it may have been, a little different from that of the Pharisee whom Jesus represents in the parable as praising himself before God for his fasting twice in the week and giving tithes of all that he possessed, yet quite akin to his in comparing himself with and despising others. He, too, might have stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or as this woman here. Anything like contact, concert, familiar intercourse with such a low, abandoned woman, no man who had any proper self-respect, he thinks, could practise or endure. And now that he sees Jesus consenting to be touched and handled by her, his only explanation of it is that he cannot know what kind of woman she is. "Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet,

would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him."[1]

In thinking and feeling so, he entirely overlooks the change that had taken place—the evidence of which appeared in the very manner of the woman's present conduct, and above all the nature and strength of the tie which that change created between her and Jesus. It was to lift him out of this deep abyss of pride, and if possible to show him how much closer, deeper, tenderer a relationship it was in which this penitent stood to him, than that in which he, Simon, stood, that Jesus stated the case of the two debtors. "And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged."

[1] Luke vii. 39.

As little as David saw the drift of Nathan's parable of the little ewe lamb, so little did Simon at first perceive the drift of the one now addressed to himself, and so he promptly answers, I suppose that it would be he to whom he forgave most. Out of his own mouth he stands convicted. It would be straining the short parable in this instance spoken by our Lord if we took it as strictly and literally representing the relative positions before God in which Simon and the woman stood, or as intimating that both had been actually forgiven, the one as much more than the other as five hundred exceeds fifty pence. It is not so much the amount actually owed as that known and felt by the debtors to be owing, and their conscious inability to meet in any way the payment, that supplies the groundwork of our Lord's application of the supposititious case. "And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I

came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." Thou hast been watching, Simon, all that this woman has been doing, but what is the true explanation of her conduct, the explanation that vindicates at once her conduct to me and my conduct to her? Why is it that she has been showing me marks of respect, and strong personal attachment contrasting so with those that you have shown, or rather have omitted to show? She has done so, because she loves so much; and she loves so much, because she has been so much forgiven. It is but little compared with her that you feel you owe, but little that you can be forgiven; but little, therefore, that you love. In speaking to him thus, how forbearingly, how leniently did the Lord deal with Simon; how much more leniently and forbearingly we may be apt to think than he had deserved, or than his case warranted. But it was so in every case

with our Divine Master, ever seeking the good of those he dealt with—striving by the gentle insinuations of his grace to win his way into their consciences and hearts, rather than by full display of all their guilt or stern denunciation of it. If in this instance he was successful, if Simon's eyes were opened to discern in the two debtors himself and the woman, and in the creditor to whom all their debts were due none other than He who was sitting at his table, what a wonderful revolution in his estimate of Jesus must have taken place; for nothing in this whole narrative strikes so much as the simple, natural, easy, unostentatious manner in which Jesus assumes to himself the position of that Being to whom all spiritual debts are owing, and by whom they are forgiven.

"Her sins," said Jesus of the woman to Simon, "which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much." So to interpret this saying of the Saviour as to make the loving the ground of the forgiveness would be to contradict both the letter and spirit of the preceding parable, in which the love is represented as flowing out of the forgiveness,

and not the forgiveness as flowing out of the love —Jesus points to the love not as the spring but as the evidence of the forgiveness—to the strength of the one as indicating the extent of the other.

When Christ said so emphatically to the Pharisee, "Simon, I have somewhat to say to thee," the attention of the woman must have been for the moment diverted from her own case, directed to the colloquy that followed, the more so as it seemed at first to have no reference to her. But when He turned, and, looking on her for the first time, said, "Seest thou this woman?" into what a strange tumult of emotion must she have been thrown, all eyes on her—the contrast between her attentions and love to Jesus and those of Simon drawn out in particular after particular by our Lord himself, all closed by her hearing Him declare, "Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven." The desire, the hope of pardon, had already dawned upon her heart. She had trusted in the Divine mercy as revealed to her in Jesus, and already experienced the relief and comfort this trust was fitted to impart. Her faith, however, was yet imperfect,

her sense, her assurance of forgiveness not relieved from uncertainty and doubt; but now from the lips of the Lord Himself she hears the fact announced that her sins had been forgiven, and, as if that were not enough—as if He would do everything that word of his could do, to seal the assurance on her heart—Jesus turns to her and says, "*Thy sins are forgiven.*" Fear takes wings and flies away, doubt can find no more room within, the sins without number of all her bygone life, rush out of sight into the depths of that sea into which Jesus casts them. Not ceasing to be penitent, more penitent than ever, the bowed-down spirit is lifted up as the full blessedness enters and possesses it of one whose transgression is all forgiven, whose sin is altogether covered.

"*Thy sins are forgiven thee.*" Was it in wonder and with an awe like that of men who feel themselves in the presence of One in whom the most peculiar prerogative of the Divinity resided, or was it in hatred and with contempt of him as an arrogant, presumptuous blasphemer, that those around the table began to say to themselves,

"Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" Whatever their state of mind was as to himself, Jesus does not lay it bare, nor stop to expose or correct it. But there was one mistake that they might make as to the forgiveness he had pronounced. They might imagine it to have been capriciously or arbitrarily dispensed; they might fail to trace its connexion with the spiritual condition of her upon whom it was bestowed; if not dissevering it from its source in him, they might dissociate it from its channel, the faith in him which she had cherished. Even she herself, after what had been said, might be disposed to attach the forgiveness to the love, rather than the love to the forgiveness, overlooking the common root of both in that faith which brought her to Jesus, and taught her to cast her confidence alone and undividedly on him. Therefore his last word, as he dismisses her, is, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." In peace she goes, silently as she had entered; not a single word throughout escaping from her lips, her heart at first too full of humiliation, grief, and shame, now too full of joy and gratitude. In peace she goes, light for ever after on her heart

the reproach that man might cast upon her—the Christ-given peace the keeper of her mind and heart. She goes to hide herself from our view, her name and all her after-history unknown. The faith and traditions of Western Christendom have indeed identified her with Mary of Magdala, and assigned to her a place among those women who ministered to the Lord of their substance, who were admitted to close and familiar intercourse with him in Galilee, and who were privileged to be the last attendants on the cross and first visitors of the sepulchre. We will not presume to say how far the former life of the penitent woman would have interfered with her occupying such a position; we will not allude to the difficulty that will occur as you try to imagine what substance she could have had, or whence derived, out of which she could minister to Jesus. Neither shall we dwell upon the fact that out of Mary of Magdala seven devils had been cast, a possession not necessarily implying any former criminality of life, yet apparently quite inconsistent with the kind of life that this woman had been leading. Enough, that when Mary, called Magdalene, is

first mentioned, as she is in the opening verses of the next chapter in St. Luke's Gospel, she is introduced as a new person, not amid scenes then, nor at any time thereafter, that in any way connect her with the woman that had been a sinner. It is true that, whilst there is the absence of all evidence in favour of their identification, there is the absence also of evidence sufficient positively to disprove it. In these circumstances it may be grateful to many to trace in the narrative now before us, the earlier history of one so loved, and honoured afterwards by Jesus, as was Mary of Magdala. Much more grateful we own to us is the belief that this penitent, whose broken heart was so tenderly upbound—having got the healing from his gentle loving hands—from that notoriety into which her sin had raised her, retired voluntarily into an obscurity so deep that her name and her dwelling-place, and all her after-story, lie hidden from our sight.

The forgiveness so graciously conveyed to this nameless penitent is equally needed by all of us, is offered to us all—Christ is as willing to bestow it upon each of us as ever he was to bestow it

upon her. The manner of our possession and enjoyment of this gift depends upon the manner in which we deal with the tender of it made to us by him. We may keep it for ever hanging at a distance out before us, a thing desired or hoped for, now with more and now with less eagerness and expectancy, according to the changing temper of our mind and heart. But we might have, we ought to have, this blessing now in hand as our present full secure peace-giving possession. And not till it thus be ours, not till the hand of faith shall grasp and hold it as ours in Christ, ours through our oneness with him in whom we have redemption through his blood, even this very forgiveness of our sins; not till we exchange the vague and general and vacillating hope for the firm yet humble trust which appropriates at once in its full measure this rich benefit of our Lord's life and death for us; not till the comforting sense that our sins have been forgiven visits and cheers our heart, can we love our Saviour as he should be loved, and as he wishes to be loved by us. It is when we know how much it is that we have owed, and how much it is that we have been

forgiven, that the bond gets closest that binds us to him—a complex, ever-growing, ever-tightening bond, the more that is forgiven ever revealing more that needs forgiveness; with us as with this woman, as with all true believers, the humility, the penitence, the faith, the love, the peace, that all accompany or flow forth from the granted forgiveness, all intensifying each other, all leading us more simply, more entirely, more habitually, more confidingly to Christ, for mercy to pardon and grace to help us in every time of need.

VIII.

THE COLLISION WITH THE PHARISEES—THE FIRST PARABLES—THE STILLING OF THE TEMPEST—THE DEMONIAC OF GADARA.[1]

OUR Lord's second circuit through Galilee, if not more extensive, was more public and formal than the first. He was now constantly attended by the twelve men whom he had chosen out of the general company of his followers, while certain women, Mary, Joanna, Susanna, and many others, some of them of good position, waited on him, ministering to him of their substance. The crowds that gathered round him wherever he went; the wonder, joy, and gratitude with which his miracles, particularly those recent ones of raising the dead, were hailed; the impression his discourses had created, and the steps that he had now obviously taken towards organizing a distinct

[1] Matt. xii. 22-50; xiii.; viii. 23-34; Mark iii. 22-30; iv.; v. 1-20; Luke xi. 14-54; viii. 22-39.

body of disciples, fanned into an open flame the long-smouldering fire of Pharisaic opposition. The Pharisees of Galilee may not at first have been as quick and deep in their resentment as were their brethren of Jerusalem, neither had they the same kind of instruments in their hands to employ against him. But their resentment grew as the profound discord between the whole teaching and life of Jesus and their own more fully developed itself, and it was zealously fostered by a deputation that came down from the capital. It had already once and again broken out, as when they had charged him with being a Sabbath-breaker and a blasphemer. On these occasions Jesus had satisfied himself with rebuking on the spot the men by whom the charges had been preferred. But he had not yet broken with the Pharisees as a party, nor denounced them either privately to his disciples or publicly to the multitude. But now, at the close of his second circuit through Galilee, after nearly a year's labour bestowed upon that province, the collision came, and the whole manner of his speech and action towards them was changed.

Early in the forenoon of one of his longest and most laborious days in Capernaum, there was brought to him one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb. Blindness and dumbness, whether springing from original organic defect or induced by disease, he had often before cured. But here, underlying both, was the deeper spiritual malady of possession. Jesus cast the devil out, and the immediate effect of the dispossession was the recovery of the powers of speech and vision. There must have been something peculiar in the case. Perhaps it lay in this, that whereas dumbness in all ordinary cases springs either from congenital deafness or from some defect in the organs of speech, it was due here to neither of these causes. The man could hear as well as others, and once he had spoken as well as they. But from the time the devil entered he had been tongue-tied, had tried to speak but could not. A new and horrible kind of dumbness had come upon him, the closing of his lips by an inward constraint that, struggle as he might, he could not overcome. St. Luke speaks only of the dumbness, as if in it more than in the blindness lay the peculiarity of

the case.[1] St. Matthew records another instance of the ejection of a devil from one who was dumb, in which the same effect followed; the dumb speaking as soon as the devil was cast out.[2] It is at least very remarkable that it was in connexion with this class of cases only that the double result appeared, of an extraordinary commotion among the people and an extraordinary allegation put forward by the Pharisees.

The casting out of devils had been one of the earliest and most common of our Lord's miracles; always carefully distinguished by the Evangelists from the healing of ordinary diseases; awakening generally not more wonder, perhaps not so much, as some of the bodily cures. If the testimony of Josephus is to be credited, demoniac possession was common at this period, and exorcism by the Jews themselves not unfrequent. But when a dumb devil was cast out, and instantly the man began to speak, we are told that in one instance "the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel;"[2] and in another, "All the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the

[1] Luke xi. 14. [2] Matt. ix. 33.

Son of David?"[1] Here for the first time was an open expression of an incipient faith in Jesus as the Messiah, who was known and spoken of all over Judea as the Son of David. Whatever his words and actions might have implied, Jesus had never taken this title to himself—never claimed to be the Messiah; but now the people of themselves begin to think that it must be so —that by none other than he could works like these be done. The man whose character the Pharisees had been attempting to malign, whose influence with the people they had been doing their utmost to undermine, is not only hailed as a teacher sent from God, but as a prophet, nay, more than a prophet, the very Son of David. What is to be said and done? The facts of the case they do not, they cannot, deny. That the man's dumbness had been nothing but a common dumbness, that there had been no evil spirit in him to be cast out of him, they do not venture to suggest. Those ingenious Scribes that have come down from Jerusalem can see but one way out of the difficulty. They do not hesitate to

[1] Matt. xii. 23.

suggest it, nor their friends beside them to adopt it; and so they go about the crowd that is standing lost in wonder, saying contemptuously, "This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub, the Prince of the Devils." A wine-bibber, a gluttonous man, a friend of publicans and sinners, a Sabbath-breaker, a blasphemer, they had called him, but here is the last and vilest thing that calumny can say of him—that he is in league with Satan, and that it is to his connexion with the devil, and to that alone, that he owes all his wisdom and his power. How does Jesus meet this calumny? How does he speak of and to the men who were guilty of forging and circulating it? They were busy among the crowd secretly propagating the slander, but they must not think that he was unconscious or careless of what they were saying of him. He calls them unto him,[1] and they come. His accusers and he stand forth before the assembled multitude, fairly confronted. First, in the simplest, plainest manner, obviously for the sake of convincing any of the simple-minded people who might be ready

[1] Mark iii. 23.

to adopt this new solution of the secret of his power, he exposes its foolishness and injustice. There was, he assumes, a prince of the devils, who had a kingdom of his own, opposed to the kingdom of God. That kingdom of darkness might admit of much internal discord, but in one thing it was and must ever be united—in its antagonism to the kingdom of light. No more than any other kingdom, or city, or house, could it stand, were it, in that respect, divided against itself. Yet it was such kind of division that these Pharisees were attributing to it. Their own sons undertook to cast out devils: was it by Beelzebub that they did it? If not, why cast the imputation of doing so upon him? None but a strong one could enter the house of the human spirit, as the devil was seen to enter it in these cases of possession. It must be a stronger than he who binds him, and casts him forth, and strips him of all his spoils. This was what they had just seen Jesus do; and if he, by the mighty power of God, had done so, then no doubt the kingdom was come unto them—come in his per-

son, his teaching, his work. He—Jesus—stood now the visible head and representative of the kingdom, in the midst of them. To come to him was to enter that kingdom—to be with him was to be on the side of that kingdom; and such was its nature, such the claims he made, that there could be no neutrality, no middle ground to be occupied. He that was not with him was against him; he that gathered not with him was scattering abroad. Much there was in the spirit and conduct of many then before him whom the application of this test must bring in as guilty; but let them know that all manner of sin and blasphemy might be forgiven. In ignorance and unbelief they might speak against the Son of Man, and yet not put themselves beyond the pale of mercy; but in presence of that Divine spirit and power in which he spake and acted, not only to ignore it, but to misrepresent and malign it, as these Pharisees had done, was to enter upon a path of wilful, perverse resistance to the Spirit of God, which, if pursued, would land the men who took and followed it in a guilt for which there would be no forgiveness, either

here or hereafter; no forgiveness, not because any kind or degree of guilt could exhaust the Divine mercy or exceed its power, but because the pursuers of such a path, sooner or later, would reach such a state of mind, and heart, and habit, that all chance or hope of their ever being disposed to fulfil, or capable of fulfilling, those conditions upon which alone mercy is or can be dispensed, would vanish away. The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which never hath forgiveness, lies not in any single word or deed. Jesus, though not obscurely hinting that in the foul calumny that had been uttered there lay the elements of the unpardonable offence, does not distinctly say that the men before him never would or could be forgiven for uttering it. His words are words of warning rather than of judgment. A monstrous accusation had been made, one in which, if the men who made it persevered, they would be displaying thereby the very temper and spirit of such blasphemy against the Holy Ghost as never would be forgiven. It was out of an evil heart that the evil word had been spoken. It was by a corrupt tree that this cor-

rupt fruit had been borne, and the heart would get worse, the tree more rotten, unless now made better. Such bitter words of ungodly malice and despite as the Pharisees had spoken, were but outward indices of the state of things within. Yet such good signs were words in general, that "Verily," said Jesus, "I say unto you, . . . By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

The men whom Jesus thus publicly rebuked—characterizing them as a generation of vipers—for the moment were silenced. Some of their party, however, now interposed. Jesus had unequivocally asserted that his works had been wrought by none other than the mighty power of God. Let Him prove this as Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Elijah had done. The works themselves were not enough to do this. The popular belief was that demons and false gods could work signs on earth. It was the true God only who could give signs from heaven. Such a sign they had asked Christ to show.[1] "The people gathered thick together," we are told, to hear Christ's

[1] Luke ix. 16.

answer; but, as at other times when the same demand was made, our Lord would point to no other sign than that of the most remarkable foreshadowing in Old Testament times of his own resurrection from the dead. This allusion to the extraordinary incident in the history of Jonas was doubly unsatisfactory to his hearers. It was no sign from above, but rather one from below. It was a sign of that of which they had as yet no conception—in which they had no faith—it carried with it to them no additional or confirmatory evidence. No other sign, however, was to be given to a generation which was acting worse than the heathen inhabitants of Nineveh, the Gentile queen of the south; a greater than Jonas, a greater than Solomon, was among them, yet they despised his wisdom and would not repent at his call. A brighter light than had ever dawned upon them was now shining—nay, was set up conspicuously for them to behold it; but there must be an eye within to see, as well as a light without to look at, before any true illumination can take place. And if that eye be evil—be in any way incapacitated

for true discernment, whatever the external effulgence be, the body remains full of darkness. Even such a darkness was now settling over a people who were going to present but too sad a type of what was sometimes seen in cases of demoniac possession, when an unclean spirit, for a time cast out, returned with seven other spirits more wicked than itself. From amongst the Jewish people, from and after the Babylonish captivity, the old demon of idolatry had been ejected. For a time the house had been swept and garnished, but now a sevenfold worse infatuation was coming upon this generation, to drive it on to a deadlier catastrophe.

The exciting intelligence that in the presence of a vast multitude Jesus had been accused by the Pharisees of being nothing else than an emissary and ally of the devil; that, not satisfied with defending himself against the charge, he had in turn become their accuser, and broken out into the most open and unrestrained denunciation of their whole order; that the feud which for months past had been secretly gathering strength had ended at last in an open rupture, was carried

to the house in which Mary and the Lord's brothers were dwelling. A fatal thing it seems to them for him to have plunged into such a deadly strife with the most powerful party in the country. They will try what they can to draw him out of it. They hasten to the spot and find the crowd so large, the press so great, that they cannot get near him. They send their message in to him. "Behold!" says one who is standing next to Jesus, "thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee." A mother who if fond enough was yet so fearful, who once before had tried to dictate to him, and had been checked at Cana; brethren, who thought that he was beside himself, none of whom as yet believed on him—what right had they to interrupt him at his work—to move him from his purpose? "Who is my mother?" said he to the man who conveyed to him the message, "and who are my brethren?" Then pausing, looking "round about on them which sat about him," stretching forth his hands towards his disciples—"Behold!" he exclaimed, "my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of

my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." A woman in the crowd, who has been standing lost in a mere human admiration of him, hears his mother spoken of, and cannot in the fulness of her womanly emotion but call her blessed: "Yea, rather blessed," said Jesus to her, "are they that hear the word of God, and keep it."

So, when in the very heart of his mission-work on earth they spake to him about the closest human ties, his nearest earthly relatives—close as these were, and willing as he was in their own mode and sphere to acknowledge them, so resolutely did Jesus wave them aside, so sublimely did he rise above them, setting himself forth as the elder brother of that whole family in heaven and earth named by his name, and who are followers in the footsteps of him who came not to do his own will but the will of him that sent him. The earthly and the heavenly bonds, the common and the Christian ties, do not always coincide, neither are they always in harmony. If ever they interfere—if mother, or brother, or sister, or dearest friend should once

tempt us away from him in nearness to whom standeth our eternal life—then let us remember the scene in Capernaum, and ask our Lord to give us of his own Spirit, here as everywhere to follow him.

Jesus did not go out to his mother and brethren when they sent for him, did not go even to their house when fatigue and exhaustion called for a brief repose. He rather accepted the invitation of a Pharisee to take a hurried repast in a neighbouring dwelling, the multitude waiting meanwhile for him without. In haste to resume his work, and knowing withal that it was no friendly company he was asked to join, Jesus went in and sat down at once, neglecting the customary ablutions. The host and his friends were not slow to notice the neglect, nor was he less slow to notice the sentence against him they were passing in their hearts. The men around him here were part of that very band whose vile imputation of confederacy with Satan had already released his lips from all restraint, and called for and vindicated his addressing them as he had done. Nor does he alter now his tone. We may

not, indeed, believe that all which St. Luke, in the latter half of the eleventh chapter of his Gospel, records as spoken by him—the woe after woe pronounced upon the Pharisees and the lawyers—was uttered indoors, as soon as he had seated himself at the table. Knowing how usual a thing it is with the three Synoptical Evangelists to bring together into one discourse sentences that were uttered at different times and upon different occasions, we are inclined rather to believe that the greater part of it was spoken after the hasty meal was over, and Jesus stood once more the centre of a vast concourse, with Scribes and Pharisees urging him vehemently, and provoking him to speak many things, lying in wait for him to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.[1] They got this out of his mouth, that here in Galilee—a year and more before that memorable day, the last of his public ministry, when he stood within the Temple and closed the exciting controversies with those terrible denunciations which St. Matthew has preserved to us in the twenty-third

[1] Luke xi. 53, 54.

chapter of his Gospel, in briefer and more compendious terms, the very woes that were then rolled over the heads of the Pharisees of Jerusalem, were rolled over theirs in Capernaum. A new phase of our Saviour's character—very different from that which we had before us in his treatment of the penitent sinner—thus reveals itself to our view; his firmness, his courage, his outspokenness, the depth of his indignant recoil from, the sternness of his unmitigated condemnation of, the inconsistencies, the hypocrisies, the haughtiness, the cruelty, the tyranny of the Scribes and Pharisees. He had a right to speak and act towards them which none but he could have. He was their omniscient judge, he knew that in hating him they were hating his Father also, that the spirit of persecution which they displayed sprang from a deeper source than mere personal animosity to him as a man. As no other can ever occupy the same position towards his fellow-men as that in which Jesus stood, so to no other can his conduct here be a guide or precedent. One thing only remains for us to do: to try to enter as thoroughly as we can into the

entire harmony that there was between all the love, and pity, and gentleness, and compassion that he showed towards the ignorant, the erring, the sinful who manifested the least openness to conviction, the least disposition to repent and believe, and that profound and, as we may call it, awful antipathy which he displayed to those who, built up in their spiritual pride, under the very cloak of a pretentious pietism, indulged some of the meanest and most malignant passions of our nature, wilfully shutting their eyes to the light of heaven that was shining in the midst of them, and plunging on in the darkness towards nothing short of spoken and acted blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.

But if the forenoon of this long and busy day at Capernaum was rendered remarkable by the change of attitude which Jesus assumed towards the Pharisees, its afternoon was rendered equally if not still more remarkable by the change of method in addressing the multitude. More than half of the term allotted to his ministry in Galilee had now expired. The temper of the community towards him had been fairly tried. The result

was sufficiently manifest. Here beside him was a small band of followers—ignorant yet willing to be taught; weak in faith but strong in personal attachment. There against him was a powerful and numerous band, socially, politically, religiously the leaders of the people. Between the two lay the bulk of the common people—greatly excited by his miracles, listening with wonder and half approval to his words, siding with him rather than against him in his conflict with the Pharisees. With them, if we looked only at external indications, we should say that he was generally and highly popular. But it was popularity of a kind that Jesus had no wish to gain, as he had no purpose to which to turn it. Behind all the show of outward attachment he saw that there was but little discernment of his true character, but little disposition to receive and honour him as the Redeemer of mankind, but little capacity to understand the more secret things of that spiritual kingdom which it was his office to establish and extend. And as he had altered his conduct towards his secret enemies by dragging out their opposition to the light and openly de-

nouncing them, so now he alters his conduct toward his professed friends, by clothing his higher instructions to them in a new and peculiar garb. As he left the house in which the hasty mid-day meal was taken, the crowd gathered round him—increased in numbers, a keener edge put upon its curiosity by what had just occurred. Followed by this crowd, he goes down to the lake side; finds the press of the people round about him oppressive and inconvenient, sees a boat lying in close to the beach, enters it, sits down, and separated from them by a little strip of water addresses the multitude that lines the shore. He speaks about a sower, and how it fared with the seed he sowed: "some of it fell by the wayside, and some upon stony places, and some among thorns, and some upon good soil." He speaks about a field in which good seed was sown by day but tares by night, and how both grew up, and some would have them separated; but the householder to whom the field belonged would not hear of it, but would have both grow together till the harvest. He speaks of a man casting seed into his ground, and finding that by night

and by day, whether he slept or woke, was watching and tending, or doing nothing about it, that seed secretly grew up, he knew not how: he speaks of the least of seeds growing up into the tallest of herbs; of the leaven working in the three measures of meal till the whole was leavened; and he tells his hearers that the kingdom of heaven is like unto each of the things that he describes. His hearers are all greatly interested, for it is about plain, familiar things of the house, the garden, the field, that he speaks; and yet a strange expression of mingled surprise and perplexity sits upon every countenance. The disciples within the boat share these sentiments equally with the people upon the shore. Nothing seems easier than to understand these little stories of common life; but why has Jesus told them? What from his lips can they mean? What has the kingdom of heaven to do with them? Teaching by parables was a common way of instruction with the Jewish Rabbis. But it had not been in the first instance adopted by Christ; they had not as yet heard a single parable from his lips; and now he uses nothing else—

parable follows parable, as if that were the only instrument of the teacher that Jesus cared to use. And besides the entire novelty of his employment of the parabolic method, there is that haze, that thick obscurity, which covers the real meaning of the parables he utters. The disciples take the first opportunity that offers itself of speaking to him privately, and putting to him the question: "Why speakest thou to them in parables?" a question which they would have never put but for the circumstance that they had never before known him employ this kind of discourse. Now mark the answer to the question. "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall

not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross; and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."[1]

It was partly then for the purpose of concealment that, upon this occasion, these parables were spoken. Those before whose eyes this veil was drawn had already been tried with a different kind of speech. Most important truths had been announced to them in the simplest and plainest language, but they had shut their minds and hearts against him. And now, as a righteous judgment upon them for having acted thus, these mysteries of the kingdom, which might have been presented to them in another and more transparent guise, are folded up in the concealing drapery of these parables. Speaking generally, parables are meant to make things plainer, not more obscure; and of many of our Lord's parables, such as those of the good Samaritan, the unjust judge, the Pharisee and the publican, it is true

[1] Matt. xiii. 1-15.

that neither by those who first heard them uttered, nor by any who have read them since, has there been the slightest doubt or uncertainty as to their meaning. But there is another and a larger class of the parables of Christ to which this description does not apply, which were not understood by those to whom they were first addressed, which may still be misunderstood, which, instead of being homely tales illustrative of the simplest moral and religious truths, the simplest moral and religious duties, are figurative descriptions, prophetic allegories, in which the true nature of Christ's spiritual kingdom, the manner of its establishment and extension, and all its after varied fortunes, are portrayed. It was to this class that the parables just spoken by our Saviour belonged. And there was mercy as well as judgment in their employment. Behind their concealing drapery bright lights were burning, the very darkness thrown around intended to stimulate the eye to a keener, steadier gaze. As his disciples had dealt with the instructions that had previously come from his lips differently from those who seeing saw not, hearing would not

understand, so now Jesus deals differently with them as to the parables. They appear to have been at first as much in the dark as to their meaning as was the general audience on the shore. But they were willing, even anxious, to be taught. When the cloud came down on the teachings of their Master, and these dark sayings were uttered, they longed to enter into that cloud to gaze upon the light which burned within. They came seeking, and they found; knocking, and the door was opened to them. To them it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom, but to the others, uncaring for it, unprepared for it, and unworthy of it as they were, it was not given. By a private and full explanation of the two first and leading parables, those of the Sower, and the Tares and the Wheat, Jesus put into his disciples' hands the key to all the eight parables that he delivered; taught them to see therein the first plantation of the Church—the field, the world—the good seed, the Word of God; the entrance and the allowed continued presence of obstruction and opposition,—the silent and secret growth of God's empire over human hearts; the

small enlarging into the great; its pervasive transforming power; its preciousness, whether found after diligent search, or coming into the possessor's hands almost at unawares; the end of all in the gathering out of that spiritual kingdom of the Lord of all that should offend.

What was true, locally and temporarily, of the instructions of that single day, of that small section of our Lord's teaching, is true of the whole body of those disclosures of God made to us in the Bible. There are things simple and there are things obscure; things so plain that he who runs may read; things so deep that he only can understand who has within him some answering spiritual consciousness or aspiration, out of which the true interpretation springs. We must first compass the simple, if we would fathom the obscure. We must receive into honest hearts and make good use of the plainest declarations of the Divine Word, if we would have that lamp kindled within us, by whose light the more recondite of its sayings can alone be understood. And if we refuse to do so, if we will not follow the course here so plainly marked out for us, if we turn our eyes

from that which they could see if they would, if we stop our ears against that which they could understand, if we follow not the heavenly lights already given so far as they can carry us, have we any right to complain if at last our feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and we look for light, and, behold, it is turned into darkness? It is in an inner, remote sanctuary, the true Shekinah, where the light of God's gracious presence still shineth, to be approached with a humble, tractable spirit, the prayer upon our lips and in our heart, "What I know not, Lord, teach thou me; I beseech thee show me thy glory." It is not in the intellect, it is in the conscience, in the heart, that the finest and most powerful organs of spiritual vision lie. There are seals that cover up many passages and pages of the Bible, which no light or fire of genius can dissolve; there are hidden riches here that no labour of mere learned research can get at and spread forth. But those seals melt like the snow-wreath beneath the warm breathings of desire and prayer, and those riches drop spontaneously into the bosom of the humble and the contrite, the poor and the needy.

Five parables appear to have been addressed by Jesus to the multitude from the boat, their delivery broken by the private explanation to the disciples of the parable of the Sower. Landing, and sending the multitude away, Jesus entered into the house. There the disciples again applied to him, and he declared unto them the parable of the Tares. Thereafter, the three shorter parables of the Treasure, the Pearl, and the Net were spoken to the disciples by themselves. The long, laborious day was now nearly over, and in the dwelling which served to him as a home while in Capernaum, he might have sought and found repose. Again, however, we see him by the lake-side; again, under the pressure of the multitudes. Seeking rest and seeing no hope of it for him in Capernaum, Jesus said, "Let us pass over unto the other side." That other eastern side of the Lake of Galilee offered a singular contrast to the western one. Its wild and lonely hills, thinly peopled by a race, the majority of whom were Gentiles, were seldom visited by the inhabitants of the plain of Gennesaret. Now-a-days both sides of the lake are desert; yet still

there is but little intercourse between them. Few travellers venture to traverse the eastern shore; fewer venture far into the regions which lie behind, which are now occupied wholly by an Arab population. As offering to him in some one or other of the deep valleys which cleave its hills and run down into the sea, a shady and secure retreat for a day or two from the bustle and fatigue of his life in Galilee, Jesus proposes a passage across the lake. All is soon ready; and they hurriedly embark, taking Jesus in "even as he was," with no preparation for the voyage. It was, however, but a short sail of six or eight miles. Night falls on them by the way, and with the night one of those terrible hurricanes by which a lake which lies so low, and is bounded on all sides by hills, is visited at times. The tempest smote the waters, the waves ran high and smote the little bark. She reeled and swayed, and at each lurch took in more and more water till she was nearly filled, and once filled, with the next wave that rolls into her she must sink. They were practised hands that navigated this boat, who knew well the lake in all its moods;

not open to unreasonable fear, but now fear comes upon them, and they are ready to give up all hope. Where all this while is he at whose bidding they had embarked? They had been too busy for the time with the urgent work required by the sudden squall, to think of him; the mantle of the night's thick darkness may have hidden him from their view. But now in their extremity they seek for him, and find him "in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow." Unbroken by all the noise of winds and waves without, and all the tumult of those toiling hands within, how quiet and deep must that rest of the wearied one have been! They have some difficulty in awaking him, and they do it somewhat roughly. "Master! Master!" they cry to him, "save us! We perish! Carest thou not that we perish?" With a word of rebuke for their great fear and little faith, Jesus rises, and speaking to the boisterous elements as one might speak to a boisterous child, he says to the winds and the waves, "Peace, be still!" Nature owns at once the sovereignty of the Lord. The winds cease their blowing—the waves subside—instantly there is a great calm.

Those who had sought and roused the sleeping Saviour fall back into their former places, resume their former work; at the measured stroke of their oars the little vessel glides silently over the placid waters. All quiet now, where but a few minutes before all was tumult; few words are spoken during the rest of the voyage, the rowers only whispering to each other as they rowed: "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the waves obey him?"

Jesus lying this moment under the weakness of exhausted strength, rising the next in all the might of manifested omnipotence: in close proximity, in quick succession, the humanity and the divinity that were in him exhibited themselves. Though suddenly roused to see himself in a position quite new to him, and evidently of great peril, Jesus has no fear. His first thought is not of the danger, his first word is not to the tempest, his first care is not for the safety of the body, it is for the state of the spirit of those who wake him from his slumbers; nor is it until he has rebuked their fears that he removes the cause, but then he does so, and does it effectually, by the

word of his power. And so long as the life we are living shall be thought and spoken of as a voyage, so long shall this night scene on the lake of Galilee supply the imagery by which many a passage in the history of the Church, and many in the history of the individual believer, shall be illustrated. Sleeping or waking, let Christ be in the vessel and it is safe. The tempest may come, our faith be small, our fear be great, but still if in our fear we have so much faith as to cry to him to save us, still in the hour of our greatest need will he arise to our help, and though he may have to blame us for not cherishing a livelier trust and making an earlier application, he will not suffer the winds or the waves to overwhelm us.

The storm is past, the night is over, the morning dawns, the opposite coast of the Gadarenes is reached. Here, then, in these lonely places there will be some rest for Jesus, some secure repose? Not yet, not instantly. Soon as he lands, immediately, from some neighbouring place of graves[1] there comes forth a wild and

[1] As to the locality in which the miracle was wrought see note at the end of the volume.

frenzied man, a man possessed by many devils; for a long time so possessed, exceeding fierce so that no man could tame him. They had bound him with fetters and with chains; the fetters he had plucked asunder, the chains had been broken by him. Flying from the haunts of men, flinging off all his garments, the naked, howling maniac lies day and night among the tombs, crying and cutting himself with stones; so fiercely assaulting all who approached him that no man might pass by that way. From his lair among the graves the devil-haunted madman rushes upon Jesus. His neighbours had all fled terrified before him. This stranger who has just landed flies not, but tranquilly contemplates his approach. He who had so lately brought the great calm down into the bosom of the troubled lake, is about now to infuse a greater calm into this troubled spirit. The voice that an hour or two before had said to the winds and the waves, "Peace, be still," has already spoken, while yet the poor demoniac is afar off, to the possessing devil that was within, and said, "Come out of him, thou unclean spirit." If underneath that dark and terrible tyranny of

the indwelling demons there still survived within the man some spark of his native independence, some glimmering consciousness of what he once had been and might be again, were but those usurpers of his spirit quieted; if something of the old man still were there, crouching, groaning, travailing beneath the intolerable pressure that drove him into madness—what a new and strange sensation must have entered this region of his consciousness when the devils which had been rioting within him, claiming and using him as all their own, heard that word of Jesus, and in their terror began to cry out, as in the presence of one their acknowledged Superior and Lord! What a new light of hope must have come into that wild and haggard eye as it gazed upon that mysterious being, hailed by the devils as the Son of the Most High God! His relief, indeed, was not immediate; the devils did not at once depart. There was a short and singular colloquy between Christ and them. They beseech, they adjure him not to torment them before the time, not to send them down at once into the abyss, or if he were determined to give liberty to their human captive, then

not to drive them from the neighbourhood, which, perhaps, was their only earthly allotted haunt, but to suffer them to enter into a neighbouring herd of swine. The permission was given. They entered into the swine—how we know not, operating upon them how and with what intent we know not. All we have before us is the fact, that the whole herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. What became of the devils then? As the dumb beasts went down into the waters, did they go down into a darker, deeper depth, to be kept there in chains and darkness to the judgment of the great day? It is not said that the devils purposely destroyed the swine. It no doubt was their entrance and the frenzy into which that entrance drove the animals, that made them plunge headlong into the lake. But who shall tell us whether in their reckless and intense love of mischief the foul spirits did not here outwit themselves, creating an impulse that they could not curb, destroying the new habitation they had chosen, and by their own inconsistent and suicidal acts bringing down upon themselves the very fate from which they

had prayed to be delivered? We know far too little of the world of spirits to affirm or to deny here; far too little for us either mockingly to reject the whole as an idle tale, or presumingly to speculate as if the mysteries of the great kingdom of darkness stood revealed. It is true, indeed, that whatever was the design or anticipation of the devils in entering into the swine, the result must have been known to Jesus. Knowing then, beforehand, how great the destruction here of property and animal life would be, why was the permission given? We shall answer that question when any man will tell us how many swine one human spirit is worth—why devils were permitted to enter anywhere or do any mischief upon this earth—why such large and successive losses of human and bestial life are ever suffered, the agencies producing which are as much under the control of the Creator as these devils were under that of Christ. To take up the one single instance in which you can connect the loss of life, not directly with the personal agency but evidently with the permission of the Saviour, and to take exception to that, while the mystery of the large

sufferance of sin and misery in this world lies spread out everywhere before and around us, is it not unreasonable and unfair? We do not deny that there is a difficulty here. We are not offering any explanation of this difficulty that we consider to be satisfactory. We are only pleading, first, that in such ignorance as ours is, and with a thousand times greater difficulties everywhere besetting our faith in God, this single difficulty should throw no impediment in the way of our faith in Jesus Christ.

The keepers of the herd, who had waited to see the issue, went and told in the adjoining village and in the country round about all that had happened. At the tidings the whole population of the neighbourhood came out to meet Jesus. They found him, with the man who had been possessed with devils, in the manner they all knew so well, sitting at his feet—already clothed, in his right mind, all traces of the possession, save the marks of the bonds and of the fetters, gone. They were alarmed, annoyed, offended at what had happened. There was a mystery about the man, who had such power

over the world of spirits, and used it in such a way, that repelled rather than attracted them. They might have thought and felt differently had they looked aright at their poor afflicted brother, upon whom such a happy change had been wrought. But they thought more of the swine that had perished than of the man that had been saved; and they besought Jesus to depart out of their coasts. He did not need to have the entreaty addressed to him a second time; he complied at once—prepared immediately to re-embark, and we do not read that he ever returned to that region again—they never had another opportunity of seeing and hearing him. Nor is it the habit of Jesus to press his presence upon the unwilling. Still he has many ways of coming into our coasts, and still have we many ways of intimating to him our unwillingness that he should abide there. He knows how to interpret the inward turning away of our thoughts and heart from him—he knows when the unspoken language of any human spirit to him is—Depart; and if he went away so readily when asked on earth, who shall assure us that he may

not as readily take us at our word, and when we wish it, go,—go, it may be, never to return?

Christ heard and at once complied with the request of the Gadarenes. But there was another petition presented to him at the same time, with which he did not comply. From the moment that he had been healed, the demoniac had never left his side—never thought of parting from him —never desired to return to home, or friends, or kindred. A bond stronger than all others bound him to his deliverer. When he saw Jesus make the movement to depart, he accompanied him to the shore; he went with him to the boat. And as he fell there at his feet, we can almost fancy him taking up Ruth's words, and saying, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." He is ready—he is anxious to forsake all and follow Jesus, but he is not permitted. "Go home to thine own house and to thy friends," said Jesus to him, "and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had

compassion on thee." It was to a heathen home —to friends that knew little about the Lord, and cared little for such knowledge, to whom he was to go. No small trial to be torn thus from the Saviour's side, to go and reside daily among those who had sent that Saviour away from them. But he did it—did more even than he was told to do; not in his own house alone, nor among his own friends alone, but throughout the whole Gentile district of Decapolis he published abroad the great things that Jesus had done for him. Better for the man himself—too long accustomed to dwell alone, taking a tincture of the solitary places in which he dwelt into his own spirit, to mix thus freely and widely with his fellow-men; and better undoubtedly it was for those among whom he lived—acting as the representative of him whom in person they had rejected, but who seem to have lent a more willing ear to the man of their own district and kindred, for we are told that as he spake of Jesus, "all men did marvel," and some, let us hope, did believe.

Let one closing glance be given at the strange picture which this passage in our Saviour's life

presents. It abounds in lights and shadows, in striking contrasts—the meanest selfishness confronted with the purest, noblest love. Reckless frenzy, abject terror, profound attention, devoted attachment, rapidly succeed each other in him who, brought into closest union with the highest and the lowest of the powers of the spiritual world, presents to us a condensed epitome of the great conflict between good and evil —between Christ and Satan—in the domain of the human spirit. Undoubtedly it stands the most remarkable instance of dispossession in the gospel narrative, revealing to us at once the depth of that degradation to which our poor humanity may sink, and the height of that elevation to which, through the power and infinite compassion of the Saviour, it may be raised. Was it for the purpose of teaching us more manifestly that Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil, that in that age of His appearance devils were permitted to exercise such strange dominion over men? Was it to bring into visible and personal collision the heads of the two opposite spiritual communities—the Prince of Light and the Prince

of Darkness—and to make more visible to all men the supremacy of the one over the other? Was it that as the Sun of Righteousness rose in one quarter of the heavens, upon the opposite a cloud of unwonted blackness and darkness was allowed to gather, that with all the greater brightness there might shine forth the bow of promise for our race? Whatever be the explanation, the fact lies before us that demoniacal possessions did then take place, and were not continued. But though the spirits of evil are not allowed in that particular manner to occupy, and torment, and degrade us, have they been withdrawn from all access to, and all influence over our souls? With so many hints given us in the Holy Scriptures that we wrestle not with flesh and blood alone, but with angels and principalities and powers of darkness—that there are devices of Satan of which it becomes us not to remain ignorant—that the great adversary goeth about seeking whom he may devour; with the command laid upon us, Resist the devil, and he will flee from you; with the promise given, The Lord shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly; are we not

warranted to believe, and should we not be ever acting on the conviction, that our souls are the sphere of an unseen conflict, in which rival spirits are struggling for mastery? When some light-winged fancy carries off the seed of the word as it drops in our soul, may not that fancy have come at Satan's call, and be doing Satan's work? When the pleasures, and honours, and riches of this world are invested with a false and seductive splendour, and we are tempted to pursue them as our chief good, may he not have a hand in our temptation who held out the kingdoms of this world and all the glory of them before the Saviour's eye? But however it may be with evil spirits, we know that evil passions have their haunt and home within our hearts. These, as a strong man armed, keep the house till the stronger than they appears. That stronger one is Christ. To him let us bring our souls; and if it please him to bid any unclean spirit go forth, at his feet let us be sitting, and may he make us willing, whatever our own desire might be, to go wherever he would have us go, and do whatever he would have us do.

IX.

THE MISSION OF THE TWELVE.[1]

JESUS returned across the lake from Gadara to resume his labours in Galilee. The circuit through its southern towns and villages on which he now embarked was the last he was to make. He looked on the multitudes that gathered round him with a singular compassion. Spiritually to his eye they were as sheep scattered abroad, who when he left them would be without a shepherd. "The harvest," said he to his disciples, "truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers unto his harvest." But was he not himself the Lord of the harvest, and had he no labourers to send forth?

Labourers sufficiently numerous, sufficiently

[1] Matt. ix. 35-38; x.; Mark vi. 7-30; Luke ix. 1-9.

trained, there were not; but there were those twelve men whom he had chosen, who had for many months been continually by his side. He can send them; not permanently, for as yet they were comparatively unqualified for the work. Besides, to separate them finally from himself would be to disqualify them for the office which they afterwards were to exercise, of being the reporters of his chief sayings, the witnesses of all the leading actions of his life. But he can send them on a brief preliminary experimental tour, one happy effect of which would be, that the townsmen and villagers of Galilee shall have one more opportunity afforded them of hearing the gospel of the kingdom announced. The hitherto close companionship of the twelve with Jesus may have presented to Jewish eyes nothing so extraordinary as to attract much notice and remark. Their great teachers had their favourite pupils, whom they kept continually beside them, and whose services of kindness to them they gratefully received and acknowledged. It was something new, indeed, to see a teacher acting as Jesus did—setting up no school in any one separate locality, confining

himself to no one place and to no set times or methods; discoursing about the kingdom, week-day and Sabbath-day alike, publicly in the synagogue, privately at the supper-table, on road-side and lake-side, from the bow of the boat and the brow of the mountain. And always close to him these twelve men are seen who had forsaken their former occupations, and had now attached themselves permanently to his person, ministering to his comfort, imbibing his instructions, forming an innermost circle of discipleship, within which Jesus was often seen to retire, and to which the mysteries of the kingdom were revealed as there was ability to receive them.

But now a still more singular spectacle is presented. Jesus takes the twelve, and dividing them into pairs, sends them away from him two and two; delivering to them, as he sends them forth, the address contained in the tenth chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew. A few minute instructions were first given as to the special missionary tour on which they were despatched. It was to be confined strictly to Galilee—to the narrow district that they had already frequently

traversed in their Master's company. But he personally was not to be the burden of their message. They were not to announce his advent as the Messiah. He had not done so himself, and their preaching was not to go beyond his own. They were simply to proclaim the advent of the kingdom, leaving the works and words of Jesus to point out the place in that kingdom which he occupied. The power of working miracles they were for the time to enjoy, but they were not to use it, as they might easily have done, for any selfish or mercenary purpose. As freely as they got, they were to give. They were to be absent but a few days. They were going, not among strangers or enemies, but among friends and brethren. The more easily and expeditiously they got through their work the better. Unprovided and unencumbered, they were to cast themselves at once upon the hospitality of those they visited. "Nor was there in this," says Dr. Thomson, "any departure from the simple manners of the country. At this day the farmer sets out on excursions quite as extensive without a para in his purse, and the modern Moslem pro-

phet of Tarshîha thus sends forth his apostles over this identical region. Neither do they encumber themselves with two coats. They are accustomed to sleep in the garments they wear during the day; and in this climate such plain people experience therefrom no inconvenience. They wear coarse shoes, answering to the sandal of the ancients, but never carry two pairs; and, although the staff is the invariable companion of all wayfarers, they are content with *one*."[1] The directions given to the Apostles were proper to a short and hasty journey, such as the one now before them. On entering any town or village, their first inquiry was to be for the susceptible, the well-disposed, about whom, after the excitement consequent upon Christ's former visits, some information might easily be obtained. They were to salute the house in which such resided, to enter it, and, if well received, were to remain in it, not going from house to house, wasting their time in multiplied or prolonged formalities and salutations by the way. Wherever rejected, they

[1] *The Land and the Book*, p. 346. In St. Matthew's Gospel it is said they were not to take staves; in Mark, that they were to take one, *i.e.*, one only.

were to shake off the dust of their feet against that house or city; and to create a profound impression of the importance of the errand on which they were despatched, Jesus closes the first part of his address to them by saying, "Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment than for that city."

Hitherto, all that he had said had direct reference to the short and rapid journey that lay immediately before them. But limited as it was, the task now committed to them carried in it the germ, the type, of that larger apostolic work for which, by the gift of the Spirit, they were to be qualified, and in which, for so many years after their Master's death, they were to be engaged. And so, after speaking of the one, Jesus passes on to the other; the nearer and narrower mission sinking out of sight as his eye rests on the further and broader mission that lay before them. In the one, the nearer, there was to be no opposition or persecution; in the other, a fiery trial was in store for the faithful. The one, the nearer, was to be confined to the lost sheep of the house

of Israel; in the other, they were to come into collision with the kings and governors of the Gentiles. It is of this second period—of the persecution on the one hand, and the gifts of the qualifying Spirit on the other, by which it should be distinguished—that Jesus speaks in the passage embraced in the verses from the 16th to the 23d. The second division of the address closes, as the first does, by a "Verily I say unto you." The fact thus solemnly affirmed pointing, in the destruction of Jerusalem, to the close of that period over which Christ's prophetic eye was now ranging. "Verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come."

But now the whole earthly mission of the twelve presents itself to the Saviour's eye but as the preface and prelude to that continuous abiding work of witnessing for him upon this earth to which each separate disciple of the cross is called. Dropping, therefore, all directions and allusions referring exclusively to the Apostles and to apostolic times, Jesus, in the closing and larger portion of the address, from the 24th to

the 42d verse, speaks generally of all true discipleship to himself upon this earth: foretelling its fortunes, describing its character, its duties, its encouragements, and its rewards.

Jesus would hold out no false hopes—would have no one become his upon any false expectations. Misconception, misrepresentation, ill-treatment of one kind or other his true and faithful followers must be prepared to meet,—to meet without surprise, without complaint, without resentment. The disciple need not hope to be above his Master, the servant above his Lord. "If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household?" But why should the covert slander, the calumny whispered in secret, be dreaded, when the day was coming when all that is covered shall be revealed, all that is hid shall be made known? With his disciples there should be no concealment of any kind. He came to found no secret society, linked by hidden bonds, depository of inner mysteries. True, there were things that he addressed alone to the Apostles' ear in private, but the secrecy and reserve so practised by him was meant to be

temporary, to be transient. "What I tell you thus in darkness, that speak ye in the light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops." The doing so may imperil life, the life of the body: but what of that? "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." But even the life of the body shall be watched over, not suffered needlessly to perish. Not a single sparrow, though worth but half a farthing, falls to the ground without God's knowledge, not a hair of your head but is numbered by him. "Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." The head whose very hairs are numbered by him, your Father will not see lightly or uselessly cut off. Leave your fate then in his hands, and whatever that may be, be open, be honest, be full, be fearless in the testimony ye bear, for "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I deny before my Father which is in heaven." Times of outward persecu-

tion may not last, but think not that on this earth there shall ever be perfect peace. "I came not to send peace, but a sword," a sword which, though it drop out of the open hand of the persecutor, shall not want other hands to take it up and wield it differently. "I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's foes shall be they of his own household." And to no severer trial shall my followers be subject, than when it is not force but affection, the affection of the nearest and dearest on earth, that would draw them away from me, or tempt them to be unfaithful to my cause.

But above all other claims is the one I make on the love of all who choose me as their Saviour and their Lord. I must be first in their affections: the throne of their heart must be mine; no rival permitted to sit by my side. It is not that I am selfishly exactive of affection; it is not that I am jealous of other love; it is not that I wish or ask that you should love others less in order to love me more: but it is, that what I am

to you, what I have done for you, what from this time forth and for evermore I am prepared to be to and to do for you, gives me such a priority and precedence in the claim I make, "that he that loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." A bitter thing it may be to crucify some inordinate earthly desire or affection in order to give me, or to keep me in, that place of supremacy which is the only one I possibly or consistently can occupy. But he that taketh not up the cross for me, even as I have taken up the cross for him; he that will not deny himself, and in the exercise of that self-denial take up his cross daily and follow me; "he is not worthy of me, he cannot be my disciple." For this is one of the fixed unalterable conditions of that spiritual economy under which you and all men live, that he who maketh the pursuits and the pleasures of the present scene of things the aim of his being; he who by any manner or form of self-gratification seeks to gain his life shall lose it, shall fail at the last even in the very thing upon which he

has set his heart. Whereas he who for my sake shall give himself to the mortifying of every evil affection of his nature, to the crucifying of the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof, he shall find the life he seems to lose;—out of the death of the lower shall spring the higher, the eternal life of the spirit. And let all of every degree, whether they be Apostles or Prophets, or simple disciples, or the least of these my little ones, be animated, be elevated throughout that strife with self and sin, the world and the devil, to which in Christ they are called, by remembering what a dignified position they occupy, whose representatives they are. "He that receiveth you receiveth me; he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." And if it be in the name or the character of a prophet that any one receives you, he, the receiver, shall have a prophet's reward; or if in the name simply of a righteous man that any one receive you, he, the receiver, shall have a righteous man's reward; nay, more, if it be to any of the least of my little ones that a cup only of cold water be given in the name of a disciple, he, the giver, shall in no wise lose

his reward. For so it is, and ever shall be, not simply by great men going out upon great embassies and speaking words of power to gathered multitudes, or by great assemblies propounding or enforcing great and solemn truths, that the kingdom of Jesus Christ is advanced, but by all, the high and low, and rich and poor, and weak and strong, who bear his name, looking upon themselves as his missionaries here on earth, sent by him even as he was sent by his Father; sent, that they may be to one another what he has been to them, seeking each other's good, willing to communicate, giving and in giving receiving, receiving and in receiving imparting, each doing a little in one way or other to commend to others that Saviour in whom is all his trust, these littles making up that vast and ever multiplying agency by which the empire of the Redeemer over human spirits is being continually enlarged.

Can any one read over and even partially enter into the meaning of those words which Jesus spake to his Apostles when sending them for the first time from his side—a season when there was so little material out of which any rational

conjecture could be formed as to his future or theirs, or the future of any school or sect, or institution that He and they might found,—and not be convinced that open as day lay all that future to him who here, as elsewhere in so many of his most important discourses, sets forth in a series of perspectives—mixing with and melting into each other—the whole history of his Church in all its trials and conflicts from the beginning even to the end? But a greater than a Prophet is here—one who speaks of men being hated, persecuted, scourged, and put to death for his name's sake, as if there were nothing in any wise unreasonable or unnatural in it; one who would have all men come to him, and who asks of all who come, love, obedience, and sacrifice, such as but one Being has a right to ask, even he who has redeemed us to God by his blood, whose right over all we are and have and can do is supreme, unchallengeable, unchangeable; whose, by every tie, we are, and whom, by the mightiest of obligations, we are bound to love and serve.

The sight must have been a very extraordinary one, of the Apostles setting off two by two from

their Master's side, passing with such eagerness and haste through the towns and villages, preaching and working miracles. To hear one man preach as Jesus did, to see one man confirm his word by doing such wonderful works, filled the whole community with wonder. To what a higher pitch must that wonder have been raised when they saw others commissioned by him, endowed by him, not only preaching as he did, but healing, too, all manner of disease! True, the circle was a small one to whom such special powers were delegated; but half a year or so afterwards, as if to teach that it was not to the twelve alone —to those holding the high office of the apostolate —that Jesus was prepared to grant such a commission, he sent out a band of seventy men, embracing, we are inclined to believe, almost the entire body of his professed disciples in the north who were of the age and had the strength to execute such a task; addressing them in almost the same terms, imposing on them the same duties, and clothing them with the same prerogatives, clearly manifesting by his employment of so large a number of his ordinary disciples

that it was not his purpose that the dissemination of the knowledge of his name should be confined to any one small and peculiarly endowed body of men.

It appears from the statement of St. Matthew that when Jesus "had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities," continuing thus his own personal labours in the absence of the twelve. How long they remained apart, in the absence of all definite notes of time, can only be a matter of conjecture. A few days would carry the apostles over all the ground they had to traverse, and they would not loiter by the way. Ere very long they were all united once more at Capernaum. Tidings met them there of a very sad event which had just occurred, we know not exactly where, but if Josephus is to be trusted, it was in the remotest region of that district over which Herod Antipas ruled. It is very singular that though Herod governed Galilee, and built and generally resided at Tiberias, a town upon the lake-side a few miles south of the plain of Gennesaret, he had never met with

Jesus; had done nothing to interrupt his labours, though these were making so great a sensation all over the country; had never, apparently, till about this time even heard of him or of his works. It has not unreasonably been conjectured that soon after throwing John the Baptist into prison he had been absent on one of his journeys to Rome during those very months in which our Lord's Galilean ministry was most openly and actively conducted. Even, however, had this not been the case—as we never read of Jesus visiting Tiberias—we can readily enough imagine that Herod might have been living there all the time, too much engaged with other things to heed much what, if at all spoken of in his presence, would be spoken of contemptuously as a new Jewish religious ferment that was spreading among the people. The public tranquillity was not threatened; and, that preserved, they might have as many such religious excitements among them as they liked. Though fully cognisant of the nature and progress of the Baptist's ministry, he had done nothing to stop it. It was not on any public or political grounds,

but purely and solely on a personal one, that he had cast John into prison. At first he had listened to him gladly, and done many things at his bidding, but the Baptist had been bold enough to tell him that it was not lawful for him to have his brother's wife, and brave enough at all hazards to keep by what he said. He would neither modify nor retract. Herod's anger was kindled against him, and was well nursed and kept warm by Herodias. She would have made short work with the impudent intermeddler. But Herod feared the people, and so contented himself with casting him into that prison in which he lay so many long and weary months. While lying there alone and inactive, he had sent, as we have seen, two of his disciples to Jesus to ask him, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" It was after all but an indirect and ambiguous reply that they had brought back—enough, and more than enough, to meet any transient doubt as to Christ's character and office which in any quarter might have arisen, but carrying with it no reference to the Baptist's personal estate—embodying no message

of sympathy—holding out no prospect of relief. All that was left to John was to cling to the hope that his long imprisonment must be near its end. Herod might relent, or Jesus might interpose—somehow or other the deliverance would come. And it did come at last, but not as John had looked for it. It came in the form of that grim executioner, who, breaking in upon his solitude, and flashing before his eyes the instrument of death, bade him bow his head at once to the fatal stroke. Short warning this: was no explanation to be given? no interview with Herod allowed? not a day nor an hour for preparation given? No. The king's order was for instant execution. The damsel was waiting for the head, and the mother waiting for the damsel. How did the Baptist bear himself at that trying moment? There were no crowds to witness this martyr's death; not one there to tell us afterwards how he looked, or what he said. Alone, he had to gird his spirit up to meet his doom. A moment or two, spent we know not how, and the death-blow fell.

It is said that when death comes suddenly upon a man,—when, this moment in full posses-

sion of his faculties, he knows that next moment is to be his last—within that moment there flashes often upon the memory the whole scenery of a bygone life. If such a vision of the past rose up before the Baptist's eye, what a strange mysterious thing might that life of his on earth have seemed,—how like a failure, how seemingly abortive! Thirty long years of preparation; then a brief and wonderful success, brimful of promise; that success suddenly arrested; all means and opportunities of active service plucked out of his hand. Then the idle months in prison, and then the felon's death! Mysterious, inexplicable as such a life might look to the eye of sense, how looked it to the eye of God? Many flattering things have been said of men when they were living; many false and fulsome epitaphs have been graven on their tombs; but the lips that never flattered have said of John, that of those that have been born of women there hath not arisen a greater; his greatness mainly due to his peculiar connexion with Christ, but not unsupported by his personal character, for he is one of the few prominent figures in the sacred page

upon which not a single stain is seen to rest. And though they buried him in some obscure grave to which none went on pilgrimage, yet for that tomb the pen that never traced a line of falsehood has written the brief but pregnant epitaph: "John fulfilled his course." Terminating so abruptly at such an early stage, with large capacity for work, and plenty of work to do, shall we not say of this man that his life was unseasonably and prematurely cut off? No; his earthly task was done: he had a certain work assigned him here, and it was finished. Nor could a higher eulogium have been pronounced over his grave than this, that he had fulfilled the course assigned to him by Providence. Let the testimony thus borne to him convince us that there is a special and narrow sphere which God has marked out for each of us on earth. To be wise to know what that sphere is, to accept it and keep to it, and be content with it—diligently, perseveringly, thankfully, submissively to do its work and bear its burdens, is one of our first duties—a duty which in its discharge will minister one of our simplest and purest joys.

The bloody head was grasped by the executioner and carried into the king's presence, and given to the damsel; and she carried it to her mother. The sense of sated vengeance may for the moment have filled the heart of Herodias with a grim and devilish joy; but those pale lips—those fixed and glazed eyes—that livid countenance upon whose rigid features the shadow of its living sternness is still resting, she cannot look long at them; she waves the ghastly object from her sight, to be borne away, and laid we know not where.

The headless body had been left upon the prison floor. So soon as they hear of what has happened, some of John's disciples come and lift it up and bear it out sadly to burial; and that last office done, in their desolation and helplessness they followed the instinct of that new faith which their Master's teaching had inspired—they went and told Jesus. They did what in all our sorrows we should do: they went and told him who can most fully sympathize, and who alone can thoroughly and abidingly comfort and sustain.

X.

THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND, AND THE WALKING UPON THE WATER.[1]

HEROD first heard of Jesus immediately after the Baptist's death. While some said that this Jesus now so much spoken of was Elias, or one of the Prophets, there were others about the Tetrarch who suggested that he was John risen from the dead. Herod had little real faith, but that did not prevent his lying open enough to superstitious fancies. He was ill at ease about what he had done on his birthday feast—haunted by fears that he could not shake off. The suggestion about Jesus fell in with these fears, and helped in a way to soothe them. And so, after some perplexity and doubt, at last he adopted it, and proclaimed it to be his own conviction, saying

[1] Matt. xiv. 13-33; Mark vi. 30-52; Luke ix. 10-17; John vi. 1-21.

to his servants, as if with a somewhat lightened conscience, "This is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead: and, therefore, mighty works do show forth themselves in him"—John had done no mighty works so long as Herod knew him, but now, in this new estate, he had risen to a higher level, to which he, Herod, had helped to elevate him—he would like to see him in the new garb.

The disciples of John, who came and told Jesus of their master's death, had to tell him, also, of the strange credulity and curiosity of Herod. We are left to imagine the impression their report created. It came at the very time when the twelve had returned from their short and separate excursions, and when, as the fruit of the divided and multiplied agency that had been exerted, so many were coming and going out and in among the re-assembled band, that "they had no leisure," we are told, "so much as to eat."[1] For himself and for them, Jesus desired now a little quiet and seclusion. For himself—that he might ponder over a death prophetic of his own, the occurrence

[1] Mark vi. 21.

of which made, as we shall see, an epoch in his ministry. For them—that they might have some respite from accumulated fatigue and toil. His own purpose fixed, he invited them to join him in its execution, saying to them, "Come ye yourselves into a desert place and rest a while." Such a desert place as would afford the seclusion that they sought, they had not to go far to find. Over against Capernaum, across the lake, in the district running up northward to Bethsaida, are plenty of lonely enough places to choose among. They take boat to row across. The wind blows fresh from the north-west; for shelter, they hug the shore. Their departure had been watched by the crowd, and now, when they see how close to the land they keep, and how slow the progress is they make, a great multitude out of all the cities —embracing, in all likelihood, many of those companies which had gathered to go up to the Passover—run on foot along the shore. A less than two hours' walk carries them to Bethsaida, at the northern extremity of the lake. There they cross the Jordan, and enter upon that large and uninhabited plain that slopes down to the

lake, on its north-eastern shores. Another hour or so carries them to the spot at which Christ and his Apostles land, where many, having outstripped the boat, are ready to receive them, and where more and more still come, bearing their sick along with them. It was somewhat of a trial to have the purpose of the voyage apparently thus baffled, the seclusion sought after thus violated; but if felt at all, it sat light upon a heart which, turning away from the thought of self, was filled with compassion for those who were "as sheep not having a shepherd." Retiring to a neighbouring mountain, Jesus sits down and teaches, and heals; and so the hours of the afternoon pass by.

But now another kind of solicitude seizes on the disciples. They may not have been as patient of the defeat of their Master's purpose as he was himself. They may have grudged to see the hours that he had destined to repose broken in upon and so fully occupied. True, they had little to do themselves but listen, and wait, and watch. The crowd grew, however; stream followed stream, and poured itself out upon the mountain side. The day declined; the evening shadows length-

ened; yet, as if never satisfied, that vast company still clung to Jesus, and made no movement to depart. The disciples grew anxious. They came at last to Jesus, and said, "This is a desert place, and the time is now past: send the multitude away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and lodge, and buy bread for themselves, for they have nothing to eat." "They need not depart," said Jesus; "give you to them to eat." Turning to Philip, a native of Bethsaida, one well acquainted with the adjoining district, Jesus saith in an inquiring tone, "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" Philip runs his eye over the great assemblage, and making a rough estimate of what would be required, he answered, "Two hundred pennyworth of bread would not be sufficient for them, that every one might 'get a little;' shall we go and buy as much?" Jesus asked how much food they had among themselves, without needing to go and make any further purchase. Andrew, another native of Bethsaida, who had been scrutinizing the crowd, discovering some old acquaintances, said, "There is a lad here, who has five

barley loaves and two small fishes; but what are they among so many?" "Bring them to me," said Jesus. They brought them. "Make the men," he said, "sit down by fifties in a company" —an order indicative of our Lord's design that there might be no confusion, and that the attention of all might be directed to what he was about to do. The season was favourable—it was the full spring-tide of the year; the place was convenient—much green grass covering the broad and gentle slope that stretched away from the base of the mountain. The marshalling of five thousand men, besides women and children, into such an orderly array, must have taken some time. The people, however, quietly consented to be so arranged, and company after company sat down, till the whole were seated in the presence of the Lord, who all the while has stood in silence watching the operation, with that scanty stock of provisions in his hand. All eyes are now upon him. He begins to speak; he prays; he blesses the five loaves and the two fishes, breaks them, divides them among the twelve, and directs them to go and distribute them among the others.

And now, among those thousands—sitting there and ranged so that all can see what is going on—the mystery of their feeding begins to show itself. There were one hundred companies of fifty, besides the women and children. In each Apostle's hand, as he takes his portion from the hand of Jesus, there is not more than would meet one man's need. Yet, as the distribution by the twelve begins, there is enough to give what looks like a sufficient portion to each of the hundred men who sits at the head of his company. He gets it, and, little enough as it seems for himself, he is told to divide it, and give the half of it to his neighbour, to be dealt with in like fashion. Each man in the ranks, as he begins to break, finds that the half that he got at first grows into a whole in the very act of dividing and bestowing; the small initial supply grows and multiplies in the transmission from hand to hand. All eat—all are satisfied. "Gather up," said Jesus, as he saw some unused food lying scattered upon the ground, "the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." They do; and while one basket could hold the five loaves and

the two fishes, it now takes twelve to hold these fragments.

Of the nature and purpose of this great miracle, we shall have something to say hereafter. Meanwhile, let us notice its immediate effect. One of its singularities, as compared with other miracles of our Lord, was this: that such a vast multitude were all at once not only spectators of it, but participators of its benefits. Seven or eight thousand hungry men, women, and children sit down upon a hill side, and there before their eyes, for an hour or two—full leisure given them to contemplate and reflect—the spectacle goes on, of a few loaves and fishes, under Christ's blessing, and by some mysterious acting of his great power, expanding in their hands till they are all more than satisfied. Each sees the wonder, and shares in the result. It is not like a miracle, however great, wrought instantly upon a single man. Such a miracle the same number of men, women, and children might see, indeed, but could not all see as each saw this. The impression here of a very marvellous exhibition of the Divine power, so near akin to that of creative energy, was one so

broadly, so evenly, so slowly, and so deeply made, that it looks to us just what we might have expected when the thousands rise from their seats, when all is over, and say one to another, what they had never got the length of saying previously, "This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world." No longer any doubt or vagueness in their faith—no longer a question with them which prophet or what kind of prophet he was. He is none other than their Messiah, their Prince. He who can do that which they have just seen him do, what could be beyond his power? He may not himself be willing to come forward, assert his right, exert his power—but they will do it for him—they will do it now; they will take him at once, and force him to be their king. Jesus sees the incipient action of that leaven which, if allowed to work, would lead on to some act of violence. He sees that the leaven of earthliness and mere Jewish pride and ambition has entered even among the twelve, who, as they see and hear what is going on, appear not unwilling to take part with the multitude. It is time for him to interfere and prevent any such catastrophe.

He calls the twelve to him, and directs them to embark immediately, to go alone and leave him there, to row back to Capernaum, where, in the course of the night or the next morning, he might join them. A strange and unwelcome proposal—for why should they be parted, and where was their Master to go, or what was he to do, in the long hours of that lowering night that was coming down in darkness and storm upon the hills and lake? They remonstrate; but with a peremptoriness and decision, the very rarity of which gave it all the greater power, he overrules their remonstrances, and constrains them to get into the boat and leave him behind. Turning to the multitude, whose plot about taking and making him a king, taken up by his twelve chief followers, this transaction had interrupted, he dismisses them in such a way, with such words of power, that they at once disperse.

And now he is alone. Alone he goes up into a mountain—alone he prays there. The darkness deepens; the tempest rises; midnight comes with its gusts and gloom. There—somewhere on that mountain, sheltered or exposed—there, for

five or six hours, till the fourth watch of the night, till after dawn—Jesus holds his secret and close fellowship with Heaven. Into the privacies of those secluded hours of his devotion we presume not to intrude. But if, as we shall presently see was actually the case, this threatened outbreak of a blinded popular impulse in his favour—the attempt thus made, and for the moment thwarted, to take him by force and make him a king—created a marked crisis in the history of our Lord's dealings with the multitudes, as well as of their disposition and conduct towards him,—this night of lonely prayer is to be put alongside of the other instances in which, upon important emergencies, our Saviour had recourse to privacy and prayer, teaching us, by his great example, where our refuge and our strength in all like circumstances are to be found.

Meanwhile it has fared ill with the disciples on the lake. Two or three hours' hearty labour at the oar might have carried them over to Capernaum: But the adverse tempest is too strong for them. The whole night long they toil among the waves, against the wind. The day had

dawned, a dim light from the east was spreading over the water; they had rowed about five-and-twenty or thirty furlongs—were rather more than half-way across the lake—when, treading on the troubled waves, as on a level, solid pavement, a figure is seen approaching, drawing nearer and nearer to the boat. Their toil is changed to terror—the vigorous hand relaxes its grasp—the oars stand still in the air or are but feebly plied—the boat rocks heavily—a cry of terror comes from the frightened crew—they think it is a spirit. He made as though he would have passed them by—they cry out the more. For though so like their Master as they now see the form to be, yet if he go past them in silence, it cannot be other than his ghost. But now he turns, and, dispelling at once all doubt and fear, he says, "Be of good cheer; it is I,—be not afraid." He is but a few yards from the boat, when, leaping at once—as was no strange thing with him—from one extreme to the other, Peter says, "Lord, if it be thou"—or rather, for we cannot think that he had any doubt as to Christ's identity—"Since it is thou, let me come unto

thee on the water." Why not wait till Jesus comes into the boat? Because he is so pleased, so proud to see his Master tread with such victorious footstep the restless devouring deep; because he wants to share the triumph of the deed—to walk side by side, before his brothers, with Jesus, though it be but a step or two.

He gets the permission—he makes the attempt—is at first successful. So long as he keeps his eye on Jesus—so long as that faith which prompted the proposal, that sense of dependence in which the first step out of the boat and down upon the deep was taken, remain unshaken—all goes well. But he has scarce moved off from the boat when he looks away from Christ, and out over the tempestuous sea. The wind is not more boisterous—the waves are not higher or rougher than they were the moment before—but he was not thinking of them then. He was looking at—he was thinking of—he was hanging upon—his Master then. Now he looks at—thinks only of—wind and wave. His faith begins to fail—fearing, he begins to sink—sinking, he fixes his eye afresh and most earnestly on Jesus. The eye

affecting the heart, rekindling faith in the very bosom of despair, he cries out, "*Lord, save me.*" It was the cry of weakness—of wild alarm, yet it had in it one grain of gold. It was a cry to Jesus as to the only one that now could help —some true faith mingling now with all the fear.

The help so sought for came at once. "Immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" At the grasp of that helping hand—at the rebuke of that chiding voice, let us believe that faith came back into Peter's breast, and that not borne up or dragged through the waters, but, walking by his Master's side he made his way back to the little vessel where his comrades were, to take his place among them a wiser and humbler man. As soon as Jesus and he had entered the vessel, we are told that the wind not only ceased, but that "immediately the ship was at the land whither they went." Of those who were in the ship that night some were exceedingly, but stupidly amazed, their hearts hardened—untouched by the multi-

plied miracles[1] of the last twelve hours,—others came and worshipped Jesus, saying "Of a truth thou art the Son of God"—one of the first instances in which this great title, of which we shall have so much to say hereafter, was applied to him.

We may divide the miracles of our Saviour into two classes:—1. Those wrought in or upon nature. 2. Those wrought in or upon man. Of the thirty-three miracles, of which some detailed account is given us in the Gospels, nine belong to the former and twenty-four to the latter class. But this gives no true idea of the mere numerical ratio of the one kind of miracles to the other. It is but a very few of the many thousand cases of healing on the part of Jesus, of which any record has been preserved; whilst it seems probable that all the instances have been recounted in which there was any intervention with the laws or processes of the material universe. It is remarkable at least, that of the small number of this class a repetition of the same miracle is twice recorded—that of the multiplying of bread, and of an extraordinary draught of fishes.

[1] Mark vi. 51, 52.

Looking broadly at these two classes of miracles, it might appear like a discriminating difference between them—that the one, the miracles on nature, were more works of power, the miracles on man more works of love. And admitting for the moment the existence of some ground for this distinction, it pleases us to think what a vast preponderance Christ's works of love had over his works of power. But it is only to a very limited extent that we are disposed to admit the truth of this distinction. We know of no miracle of our Lord that was a mere miracle of power—a mere display of his omnipotence—a mere sign wrought to prove that he was Almighty. Every miracle of our Saviour carried with it a lesson of wisdom—gave an exhibition of his character—was a type in some lower sphere of his working as the Redeemer of our souls. In a far more intimate sense than any of them was an outward proof of his Divine authority, they were all instances, or illustrations in more shadowy or more substantial form, of the remedial dispensations of his mercy and grace in and upon the sinful children of men—wrought

by him, and recorded now for us—far more to teach us what, as our Saviour, he is—what he has already done, and what he is prepared to do for us spiritually—than to put into our hands evidence of the divinity of his mission.

Let us take the two miracles that we have now before us, both of which belong to the first and smaller class—the miracles on nature. Had it been the purpose of our Lord to make a mere display of his omnipotence in the feeding of five thousand men, one can readily imagine of its being done in a far more visible and striking style than the one chosen. He could have had the men, women, and children go and gather up the stones of the desert or of the lake-side, and as they did so could have turned each stone into bread. Or he could have brought forth the five loaves, and in presence of all the people have multiplied them into five thousand by a wave of his hand—by a word of his power. He chose rather, here as elsewhere—might we not say as everywhere?—to veil the workings of his omnipotence—to hide, as it were, the working of his hand and power, mingling it with that of

human hands and common earthly elements. How much more it was our Lord's design to convey a lesson of instruction than to give a display of his almightiness, we shall better be able to judge when we have before us his own discourse, illustrative of this very miracle, delivered on the following day. We shall then see how apt, and singular, and recondite a symbolism of what he spiritually is to all true believers lay wrapped up in his blessing, and breaking, and dividing the bread.

But further still, was not the agency of all his ministering servants, of all his true disciples, most truly, vividly, picturesquely represented in what happened upon that mountain side? "Give ye them to eat," such were Christ's words to his apostles, as he handed to each of them his portion of the five loaves and the two fishes. Take and break and give to one another, such were the apostles' words to the multitude. And as each took and broke, the half that he kept for himself grew within the hand that broke it, as did in turn the other half he handed to his neighbour. Such was the rule and method of the distribu-

tion and multiplication of the bread given to the thousands on the desert place of Bethsaida. Such is the rule and method of the distribution and multiplication of the bread of life.

Let us gladly and gratefully accept the lesson that the miracle conveys. Let us believe, and act upon the belief, that the readier we are to distribute of that bread to others, the fuller and the richer shall be our own supply—that we do not lose but gain by giving here—that there is that scattereth here and yet increaseth. From hand to hand let the life-giving bread be passed, till all the hungry and the perishing get their portion—till all eat and are satisfied.

Or look again at the other miracle—that of walking upon the water. It was indeed a miracle of power, but one also of pity too, and love. He came in the morning watch, far more to relieve from toil and protect from danger his worn-out and exposed disciples, than merely to show that the sovereignty over nature was in his hands. Nor did he let that coming pass without an incident pregnant with spiritual instruction to us also; for is there not much in each of us of

Peter's weakness? We may not have his first courage or faith—for there was much of both in the stepping out of the boat; or we may not share in his impetuousness and over-confidence; and so we may not throw ourselves among the waves and winds. But often nevertheless they are around us; and too apt are we, when so it happens with us, to look at them—to think of our difficulties and our trials and our temptations, till, Christ forgotten and out of sight, we begin to sink, happy only if in our sinking we turn to him, and his hand be stretched out to save us. In his extremity, it was not Peter's laying hold of Christ, it was Christ's laying hold of him that bore him up. And in our extremity it is not our hold of Jesus, but his of us, on which our trust resteth. Our hand is weak, but his is strong; ours so readily relaxes—too often lets go its hold; but his—none can pluck out of it, and none that are in it can perish.

XI.

THE DISCOURSE IN THE SYNAGOGUE OF CAPERNAUM.[1]

WHEN, after a single day's absence on the other side of the lake, Jesus and his disciples returned to the land of Gennesaret, so soon as they were come out of the ship, "straightway," we are told, "they knew him, and ran through that whole region round about, and sent out into all that country, and brought to him all that were diseased, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick; and whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole."[2]

Never before had there appeared to be so great and so lively an interest in his teaching, or so

[1] John vi. 22-71. [2] Matt. xiv. 35; Mark vi. 54-56.

large a measure of faith in his healing power. But behind this show of things Jesus saw that there was little or no readiness to receive him in his highest character and office. Some were prepared to acknowledge him as Elias, or one of the prophets; some, like Herod, to hail him as the Baptist risen from the dead; others, like the multitude on the lake-side, to take him by force and make him a king; but the notions of all alike concerning him and his mission were narrow, natural, earthly, selfish, unspiritual. It is at this very culminating point of his wonderful apparent popularity, that Jesus begins to speak and act as if the hope were gone of other and higher notions of himself and of the kingdom of God being entertained by the nation at large. Hitherto he had spoken much about that kingdom, and but little about himself; leaving his place therein to be inferred from what he said and did. He had spoken much about the dispositions that were to be cultivated, the duties that were to be done, the trials that were to be borne, the blessedness that was to be enjoyed by those admitted into the kingdom—of which earlier

teaching St. Matthew had preserved a full and perfect specimen in the Sermon on the Mount; but he had said little or nothing of the one living central spring of light and life and holiness and joy within that kingdom, giving to it its being, character, and strength. In plainer or in clearer guise he had proclaimed to the multitude those outer things of the kingdom whose setting forth should have allured them into it; but its inner things had either been kept back from sight, or presented in forms draped around with a thick mantle of obscurity. He had never once hinted at his own approaching death as needful to its establishment,—as laying, in fact, the foundation upon which it was to rest; nor had he spoken of the singular ties by which all its subjects were to be united personally to him, and to which their entrance and standing and privileges within the kingdom were to be wholly due. Now, however, for the first time in public, he alludes to his death, in such a way indeed as few if any of his hearers could then understand, yet one that assigned to it its true place in the economy of our redemption. Now for the first time in public he

speaks openly and most emphatically of what he is and must be to all who are saved; proclaiming a supreme attachment to himself, an entire and exclusive dependence on himself, a vital incorporating union with himself, to be the primary and essential characteristic of all true subjects of that kingdom which he came down from heaven to set up on earth. From this time he gives up apparently the project of gaining new adherents; withdraws from the crowds, forsakes the more populous districts of Galilee, devotes himself to his disciples, retires with them to remote parts of the country, discourses with them about his approaching decease, unfolding as he had not done before, both publicly and privately, the profounder mysteries of his person and of his work.

To the discourse recorded by St. John in the sixth chapter of his Gospel, the special interest attaches that it marks this transition point in the teachings and actings of our Lord. The great body of those miraculously fed upon the five loaves and the two fishes dispersed at the command of Christ, and sought their homes or new camping grounds. A number, however, still

lingered near the spot where the miracle had been performed. They had seen the apostles go off without Jesus. They had noticed that the boat they sailed in was the only one that had left the shore. They expected to meet Christ again next morning; but, though they sought for him everywhere around, they could not find him. He must have taken some means to follow and rejoin his disciples, though what these were they cannot fancy. In the course of the forenoon some boats come over from Tiberias, of which they take advantage to recross the lake. After searching for him in the land of Gennesaret they find him at last in the synagogue of Capernaum. The edge of their wonder still fresh, they say to him, "Rabbi, when camest thou hither?"—a mere idle question of curiosity, to which he gives no answer. A far weightier question for them than any as to the time or the manner in which Jesus had got here was, why were they so eagerly following him? This question he will help them to answer. "Verily, verily," is our Lord's reply, "ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were

filled." The miracle of the preceding evening had introduced a new element of attractive power. The multitudes who had previously followed Jesus to get their sick healed, and to see the wonders that he did, were now tempted to follow him, in the hope of having that miracle repeated —their hunger again relieved. Sad in heart as he contrasted their eagerness in this direction with their apathy in another, Jesus said to them, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give you; for him hath God the Father sealed." A dim yet somewhat true idea of what Christ means dawns upon the minds of his hearers. Accepting his rebuke, perceiving that he points to something required of them in order to promote their higher and eternal interests; knowing no other way in which this could be done than by rendering some service to God, but altogether failing to notice the allusion to the Son of Man and what they were to get from him,—"What shall we do," they say, "that we may work the works of God?" —tell us what these works are with which God

will be most pleased, by the doing of which we may attain the everlasting life. "This," said Jesus, "is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." It is not by many works, nor indeed, strictly speaking, by anything looked at as mere work, that you are to gain that end. There is one thing here which primarily, and above all others, you are called to do: to believe on him whom the Father hath sent unto you; to believe on me: not simply to credit what I say, but to put your supreme, undivided trust in me as the procurer and dispenser of that kind of food by which alone your souls can be nourished up into the life everlasting. It was a large and very peculiar demand on Christ's part, to put believing on himself before and above all other things required. Struck with its singularity, they say unto him, "What sign showest thou that we may see and believe thee?—what dost thou work?" If thou art really what thou apparently claimest to be—greater than all that have gone before thee, greater even than Moses—show us some sign; not one like those already shown, which, wonderful as they have been, have been

but signs on earth; show us one from heaven like that of Moses, "when our fathers did eat manna in the desert, as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat."—"You ask me" —such in effect is our Lord's reply—"to prove my superiority to Moses by doing something greater than he ever did; you point to that supply of the manna as one of the greatest of his miracles. But in doing so you make a two-fold mistake. It was not Moses that gave that bread from heaven. It came from a higher than he—from him who is my Father, and who giveth still the true bread from heaven; not such bread as the manna which was distilled as the dew in the lower atmosphere of the earth, which did not give life, but only sustained it, and that only for a limited time and a limited number. The true 'bread of God is that[1] which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.'"

Hitherto, Jesus had been speaking of a food or bread which he and his Father were ready to impart; describing it as superior to the manna, inasmuch as it came from a higher region and

[1] Not "he," as in our translation.

discharged a higher office, supplying the wants, not of a nation, but of the world; yet still speaking of it as if it were a separate outward thing. Imagining that it was something external, that eye could see, or hand could handle, or mouth could taste, to which such wonderful qualities belonged, with a greater earnestness and reverence than they had yet shown, his hearers say to him, "Evermore give us this bread." The time has come to drop that form of speech which Jesus hitherto has used; to cease speaking abstractedly or figuratively about a food or bread, to tell them plainly and directly, so that there could be no longer any misunderstanding, who and what the meat was which endureth unto everlasting life. "Then said he unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." I am not simply the procurer or the dispenser of this bread, I am more—I am the bread. If you would have it, you must not only come to me for it, but take me as it. And if you do so—if you come to me and believe on me—you shall find in me that which will fully and

abidingly meet and satisfy all the inward wants and cravings of your spiritual nature, all the hunger and the thirst of the soul. Bring these to me, and it shall not be as when you try to quench or satisfy them elsewhere with earthly things, the appetite growing even the more urgent while the things it feeds on become ever less capable of gratifying. Bring the hunger and the thirst of your soul to me, and they shall be filled. But ye will not do so, ye have not done so. "Ye have seen me, and believe not." It may look thus as if my mission had failed, as if few or none would come to me that they might have life; but this is my comfort in the midst of all the present and prevailing unbelief, that, "all that the Father giveth me shall come to me," their coming to me is as sure as their donation to me by the Father. But as sure also as is his fixed purpose is this fixed fact, "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out;" for I came down from heaven on no separate or random errand of my own, to throw myself with unfixed purposes amid unforeseen events, to mould them to unknown or uncertain issues. I came "not

to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me;" and that will of his I carry out in rejecting none that come to me, in throwing my arms wide open to welcome every one who feels himself dying of a hunger of the heart that he cannot get satisfied, in taking him and caring for him, and providing for him, not letting him perish—no part of him perish, not even that which is naturally perishable; but taking it also into my charge to change at last the corruptible into the incorruptible, the natural into the spiritual, redeeming and restoring the entire man, clothing him with the garment meet for a blessed and glorious immortality; for "this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." Let me say it once again, that no man may think there lies any obstacle to his salvation in a preformed purpose or decree of my Father, that all may know how free their access to me is, and how sure and full and enduring the life is that they shall find in me. "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the

Son and believeth on him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."[1]

Overlooking all the momentous truths, all the gracious assurances and promises that these words of Jesus conveyed, his hearers fix upon a single declaration that he had made. Ignorant of the great mystery of his birth, they murmur among themselves, saying, "Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know! How is it, then, that he saith, I came down from heaven?" Jesus does not answer these two questions, any more than he had answered the question they had put to him at first as to how he had got to Capernaum. He sees and accepts the offence that had been taken, the prejudice that had been created, and he does nothing to remove it. He enters into no explanation of the saying that he had come down from heaven; but he will tell these murmurers and objectors still more plainly than he has yet done why it is that they stand at such a distance and look so askance upon him. "Murmur not among yourselves." Hope not by any such questions as you are put-

[1] Compare John vi. 39 and 40.

ting to one another to solve the difficulties that can so easily be raised about this or that particular saying of mine. What you want is not a solution of such difficulties, which are, after all, the fruits and not the causes of your unbelief. The root of that unbelief lies deeper than where you would place it. It lies in the whole frame and habit of your heart and life. The bent of your nature is away from me. You want the desires, the affections, the aims, the motives which would create within you the appetite and relish for that bread which comes down from heaven. You want that inward secret drawing of the heart which also cometh from heaven, for "no man can come to me except the Father draw him"—a drawing this, however, that if sought will never be withheld; if imparted, will prevail, for "it is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me." Not that you are to imagine that you can go to him as you can go to me, that you can see him without seeing me, can hear him without hearing me. "Not that any man hath seen the Father,

save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father." It is in seeing me that you see the Father. It is in hearing me that you hear the Father. It is through me that the drawing of the Father cometh. Open eye and ear then, look unto me, hear, and your soul shall live. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life." He hath it now, he hath it in me. "I am that bread of life." A very different kind of bread from that of which you boast as once given of old through Moses. "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead." The manna had no life in itself. If not instantly used, it corrupted and perished. It had power to sustain life for a time, but none to ward off death. The bread from heaven is life-giving and death-destroying. "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am the living bread; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever, and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

However puzzled about the expression of his coming down from heaven, Christ's hearers might

readily enough have understood him as taking occasion from the recent miracle to represent himself, the truths he taught, and the pattern life he led, as being for the soul of man what the bread is for his body. But this change of the bread into flesh, or rather, this identifying of the two, this speaking of his own flesh as yet to be given for the life of the world, and when so given to be the bread of which so much had been already said, startles and perplexes them more than ever. Not simply murmuring, but striving among themselves, they say, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"—a question quite akin to that which Nicodemus put when he said, "How can a man be born again when he is old?" And treated by Jesus in like manner, by a repetition, in a still more stringent form, of the statement to which exception had been taken: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." To speak of eating his flesh was sufficiently revolting to those who understood him literally; but to Jewish ears, to those who had been so positively prohibited from all use of

blood as food, how inexplicable, how almost impious, must the speaking of drinking his blood have been. Indifferent to the effect, our Lord goes on to repeat and reiterate: "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me."

Such, as I have attempted in the way of paraphrase to bring them out to view, were the most salient points in our Lord's address, and such the links by which they were united. Among all our Lord's discourses in Galilee this one stands by itself distinguished from all the others by the manner in which Christ speaks of himself. Nowhere else do you find him so entirely dropping all reserve as to his own position, character, services, and claims. Let him be the Eternal Son of the Father who veiled the glories of Divinity, and assumed the garb of mortal flesh

that he might serve and suffer and die for us men and our redemption, then all that he here asserts, requires, and promises appears simple, natural, appropriate. Let the great truths of the Incarnation and Atonement be rejected, then how shall this discourse be shielded from the charges of egotism and arrogance? But Christ's manner of speaking to the people is here as unprecedented as the way of speaking about himself. Here also there is the absence of all reserve. Instead of avoiding what he knew would repel, he seems rather to have obtruded it: answering no questions, giving no explanations, modifying no statements; unsparingly exposing the selfishness, ungodliness, unbelief of his auditors. The strong impression is created that by bringing forth the most hidden mysteries of the kingdom and clothing these in forms fitted to give offence, it was his purpose to test and sift, not the rude mass of his Galilean hearers only, but the circle of his own discipleship. Such at least was its effect; for "many of his disciples when they heard this said, This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" Jesus does not treat their murmuring

exactly as he had that of the Jews; turning to them, he says, "Doth this about my coming down from heaven offend you?" but "what and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before?" Doth this about eating my flesh and drinking my blood offend you? "It is the spirit that quickeneth," the mere flesh without the spirit profiteth nothing, hath no life-giving power. It is by no external act whatever, by no outward ordinance or service, that you are to attain to the life everlasting. It is by hearing, believing, spiritually coming to me, spiritually feeding upon me, that this is to be reached. "The words that I speak unto you, they are the spirit and they are the life." Still I know, for I must speak as plainly to you as to the multitude, "that there are some of you that believe not. Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father." To have hard things said, and then to have the incredulity they generated exposed in such a way and attributed to such a cause, was what many could not bear; and so from that time many of his disciples went back and walked

no more with him. With infinite sadness, such a sorrow as he only could feel, his eye and heart follow them as they go away; but he lets them go quietly and without further remonstrance; then, turning to the twelve, he says, "Will ye also go away?"—"Lord," is Peter's prompt reply, "to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." What Jesus thought of this confession we shall see, when not long afterwards it was repeated. Now he makes no comment upon it; but as one upon whose mind the last impression of the day was that of sadness over so many who were alienated from him, he closes the interview by saying, "Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?"

Such were its immediate original results. What would be the effect of a first hearing or first reading of this discourse now? We cannot well answer the question; we have read and heard it so often, its phrases are so familiar to our ears, the key to its darkest sayings is in our hands. Nevertheless, are there not many to whom some of its expressions wear a hard and repulsive aspect,—are felt, though they would scarcely

acknowledge this to themselves, as overstrained and exaggerated? It is not possible indeed to understand, much less to sympathize with and appreciate, the fulness and richness of meaning involved in many of these expressions, unless we look to our Lord's death as the great propitiation for our sins, and have had some experience of the closeness, the tenderness, the blessedness of that mystic bond which incorporates each living member of the spiritual body with Christ the living head. Had Jesus spoken of himself, simply and alone as the bread of life, it had been possible to have understood him as setting forth his instructions and his example as furnishing the best kind of nutriment for the highest part of our nature. Even so strong a phrase as his flesh being the bread might have been interpreted as an allusion to his assumption of our nature, and to the benefits flowing directly from the Incarnation. But when he speaks of his flesh being given for the life of the world,—when he speaks of the drinking of his blood as well as of the eating of his flesh, pronounces them to be the source at first and the support afterwards of a

life that cannot die, and that shall draw after it resurrection of the body,—it is impossible to put any rational construction upon phrases like these other than that which sees in them a reference to our Lord's atoning death as the spring and fountain of the new spiritual life to which through him all true believers are begotten.

But although the great truth of the sacrificial character of Christ's death be wrapped up in such utterances, it is not that aspect of it which represents it as satisfying the claims of justice, or removing governmental obstacles to the exercise of mercy, which is here set forth, but that which views it as quickening and sustaining a new spiritual life within dead human souls. In words whose very singularity and reiteration should make them sink deep into our hearts, our Saviour tells us that until by faith we realize, appropriate, confide in him, as having given himself for us, dying that we might live,—until in this manner we eat his flesh and drink his blood, we have no life in us. Our true life lies in union with and likeness unto God, in peace with him, fellowship with him, harmony of mind and heart

with him, in the doing of his will, the enjoyment of his favour. This life that has been lost we get restored to us in Christ. "He that hath the Son hath life." We begin to live when we begin to love, and trust, and serve, and submit to our Father who is in heaven; when distance, fear, and doubt give place to filial confidence. We pass from death unto life, when out of Christ there floweth the first current of this new being into our soul. The life that thus emanates from him is ever afterwards entirely dependent upon him for its maintenance and growth.

Every living thing craves food. It differs from a dead thing in this, that it must find something out of itself that it can take in, and by some process more or less elaborate assimilate to itself; using it to repair the waste of vital energy, to build up the life into full maturity and strength. Such a thing as a self-originated, self-enclosed, self-supporting life you can find nowhere but in God. Of all the lower forms of life upon this earth, vegetable and animal, it is true that by a blind, unerring instinct each seeks and finds the food that suits it best, that is fitted to preserve,

expand, and perfect. It is the high but perilous prerogative of our nature that we are left free to choose our food. We may try, do try,—have we not all tried, to nourish our souls upon that which does not and cannot satisfy? Business, pleasure, society, wealth, honour,—we try to feed our soul with these, and the recurrent cravings of unfilled hearts tell us that we have been doing violence to the first laws and conditions of our nature: a nature that refuses to be satisfied unless by an inward growth in all goodness, and truth, and love, and purity, and holiness. It is to all of us, as engaged in the endless fruitless task of feeding with the husks of the earth a spirit that pants after the glory, the honour, and the immortality of the heavenly places, that Jesus comes saying, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" "I am the bread of life; my flesh is meat indeed, my blood is drink indeed."

Bread is a dead thing in itself; the life that it supports it did nothing to originate. But the bread from heaven brings with it the life that it afterwards sustains. Secret and wonderful is the

process by which the living organism of the human body transmutes crude dead matter into that vital fluid by which the ever-wasting frame is recruited and reinvigorated. More secret, more wonderful the process by which the fulness of life and strength and peace and holiness that lie treasured up in the living Saviour passes into and becomes part of that spiritual framework within the soul which groweth up into the perfect man in Christ Jesus. In one respect the two processes differ. In the one it is the inferior element assimilated by the superior, the inorganic changed into the organic by the energy of the latter; in the other, it is the superior element descending into the inferior, by its presence and power transmuting the earthly into the heavenly, the carnal into the spiritual. There are forms of life which, derivative at first, become independent afterwards. The child severs itself from the parent, to whom it owes its breath, and lives though that parent dies. The bud or the branch lopped off from the parent stem, rightly dealt with, lives on though the old stem wither away. But the soul cannot sever itself from him to whom it owes its second

birth. It cannot live disjoined from Christ, and the life it derives from him it has all the more abundantly in exact proportion to the closeness, the constancy, the lovingness of its embrace of and its abiding in him.

Closer than the closest of all earthly bonds is the vital union of the believer with Christ. One roof may cover those who are knit in the most intimate of human relationships. But beneath that roof, within that family circle, amid all the endearing intercourse and communion, a dividing line runs between spirit and spirit; each dwells apart, has a hermit sphere of its own to which it can retire, into which none can follow or intrude. But what saith our Lord of the connexion between himself and each of his own? "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." He opens himself to us as the hiding-place, the resting-place, the dwelling-place for our spirit. We flee unto him, and he hides us in the secret of his presence, and keeps us secretly in that pavilion. What a safe and happy home! How blest each spirit that has entered it! But more wonderful than

our dwelling in him is his dwelling in us. What is there in us to attract such a visitant?—what room within our souls suitable to receive him? Should he come, should he enter, what kind of reception or entertainment can we furnish to such a guest? Yet he comes—he deigns to enter—he accepts the poor provision—the imperfect service. Nay, more: though exposed to many a slight, and many an open insult, he still waits on; has pity, has patience, forgets, forgives; acts as no other guest in any other dwelling ever acted but himself. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." "If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

To a still higher conception of the intimacy of the union between himself and his own does Jesus carry us: "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me shall live by me." It would seem as if all the earthly imagery elsewhere employed—that of the

union of the branches with the vine, of the members with the head, of the building with the foundation-stone—however apt, were yet defective, as if for the only fit, full emblem Jesus had to rise up to the heavens to find it in the closest and most mysterious union in the universe, the eternal, inconceivable, ineffable union between the Father and himself—"That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one."

There is a resemblance approaching almost to a coincidence between the language used in the synagogue of Capernaum and that used in the upper chamber at Jerusalem. "The bread that I will give," Jesus said to the promiscuous audience of Galileans, "is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." "Take, eat," such is his language in instituting the Supper; "this is my body broken"—or as St. Luke has it—"given for you." In either case the bread turns into the flesh or body of the Lord. There had been no wine used in the feeding of the five thousand, and so in the imagery of the synagogue

address, borrowed obviously from that incident, no mention of wine was made. There was wine upon the supper-table at Jerusalem, and so, just as the bread which was before him was taken to represent the body, the wine was taken to represent his blood. That eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood, of which so much was said at Capernaum, Jesus, in instituting the ordinance of the Supper, taught his disciples to identify with a true union with himself. So close is the correspondence that many have been led to think that it was to the Eucharist, and to it exclusively, that Jesus referred in his Capernaum address. We cannot tell all that was then in our Saviour's thoughts. It may have been that in imagination he anticipated the time when he should sit down with the twelve. The Holy Communion may have been in his eye as he spake within the Galilean synagogue. But there is nothing in what he said which points to it alone. He speaks of the coming to him, the believing in him as the eating of the bread which is his flesh. He speaks of spiritual life owing its commencement, as well as its continuance, to such coming, such

believing, such eating. Is it in the ordinance of the Supper, and in it alone, that we so come and believe, eat and live? Is there no finding and having, no feeding upon Christ but in the Holy Sacrament? Freely admitting that to no season of communion, to no spiritual act or exercise of the believer, do the striking words of our Lord apply with greater propriety and force than to that season and that act, when together we show forth the Lord's death till he come again, we cannot confine them to that ordinance.

XII.

PHARISAIC TRADITIONS—THE SYRO-PHŒNICIAN WOMAN.[1]

THE Pharisaic party was well organized, watchful, and intolerant. Its chief seat was in the capital, but it kept up an active correspondence with, and had its spies in, all the provinces. Its bitter hostility, aiming at nothing short of his death, which had driven Jesus from Jerusalem, tracked his footsteps all through his Galilean ministry. At an early period of that ministry, Pharisees from Jerusalem are seen obtruding themselves upon him, and now as it draws near its close another company of envoys from the capital appear. They come down after the Passover, inflamed by the reports carried up to the Feast of the open rupture that had taken place

[1] Matt. xv. 1-28; Mark vii. 1-30.

between Christ and their brethren in Galilee. They come to find out something to condemn, and they have not long to wait. Watching the conduct of Christ and his disciples, they notice what they think can be turned into a weighty accusation against him before the people. Seizing upon some opportunity when a considerable audience was present, they say to Jesus, "Why do thy disciples transgress the traditions of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread." The oral or traditional law, with its multiplied precepts and manifold observances which had grown up around the written code, had come to be regarded as of equal, nay, in some respects, of superior importance. It was the wine, the rulers said, while the other was but the water. The acknowledgment of its authority forming the peculiar distinctive badge of Pharisaism, such a weight was attached to its observance that breaches of it were looked upon as greater sins than breaches of the written law. Among these was that of eating with unwashed hands. What with Persians, Greeks, and Romans, was but a social custom the neglect of which was only a social offence,

had been raised among the Jews by the traditions of the elders into a religious duty, the neglect of which was an offence against God. And so strict were they in the observance of the duty, that we read of a Jew of the Pharisaic type who being imprisoned and put on a short allowance of water, chose rather to die than not to apply part of what was given to the washing of his hands before eating. We can have now but an imperfect conception of how great the sin was then thought to be with which those Pharisees from Jerusalem charged publicly our Lord's disciples, aiming their real blow at him by whose precept and example they had been taught to act as they had done. "Why do thy disciples transgress the traditions of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread." No explanation is given—no defence of his disciples is entered on. Our Lord has ceased to deal with such questioners as being other than malignant enemies. He answers their question only by another—"Why do ye transgress the commandment of God by your traditions?" And as they had specified an instance in which the traditions of the elders had been violated by

his disciples, he in turn specifies an instance in which they, by their traditions, had nullified a commandment of God. No human duty was of clearer or more stringent obligation than that by which a child was bound to honour, love, and help his father and his mother. The command enforcing the duty stood conspicuously enshrined among the precepts of the Decalogue. But the elders in their traditions had found out a way of reading it by which the selfishness, or the covetousness, or the ill-will of a child might not only find room for exercise, but might cloak that exercise under a religious garb. All that one who, from any evil motive, desired to evade the obligation of assisting his parents had to do, was to say Corban over that property on which his parents might be supposed to have a claim, to declare it to be consecrated—bound over to the Lord—and he was free. Father or mother might no longer ask or hope for anything at his hands. The property might still be his. He might enjoy the life use of it; but the vow that destined it to God must come in before every other claim. So it was that these traditionalists among the

Jews of old quenched the instincts of nature, gave place to evil passions, and broke one of the first and plainest of the Divine commands, all under a pretence of piety. Nor has the spirit by which they were animated in doing so ceased to operate; nor have we far to go before an exact parallel can be found to the Jewish Corban practice, in the conduct of those who, passing by the nearest relatives, whose very poverty supplies one of the reasons why they are overlooked, bequeath to charitable or religious purposes the money that they cannot carry with them to the grave. Neither charity nor piety, however broad and pretentious the aspects they take, the services that they may seem to render, can ever excuse such a trampling under foot of the primary ties of nature, and the moral duties connected with them. And upon all those hospitals, and colleges, and churches that have been erected and endowed by funds unnaturally and improperly alienated from near and needy relatives, we can but see that old Jewish word Corban engraved, and beneath it the condemning sentence of our Lord—"Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect."

No further answer will our Lord give to the Pharisees than this severe retort. But first to the multitude, and afterwards to his disciples, he will say a word or two of that wherein all real defilement consists—not in the outward, but in the inward; its source and seat within, and not without. In the evil affections, desires, and passions of the heart,—in these and what comes out of them pollution lies; not in eating with unwashed hands; nor in the violation of any mere external conventional traditional usage.

Jesus had rolled back upon the Pharisees a weightier charge than they had brought against his disciples. He had not hesitated openly to denounce them to the people as hypocrites, applying to them the words of the Prophet, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." They were offended at being spoken to in such a way. Shunning any further outbreak of their wrath, seeking elsewhere now the rest and the seclusion that he had sought in vain on the eastern side of the lake, Jesus retired to the borders of Tyre and Sidon. He

went there not to teach nor to heal, but to enjoy a few days' quiet and repose in the lonely hilly region which looks down upon the two ancient Phœnician cities. But he could not be hid. The rumour of his arrival in the neighbourhood passed over the borders of the Holy Land. It reached a poor afflicted mother—a widow, it may have been—whose little daughter was suffering under the frightful malady of possession. This woman, we are told, was a Greek, a Syro-Phœnician by nation—a Canaanite. Phœnician was the general name given to a race whose colonies were widely spread in very ancient times. One division of this race occupied the country from which they were driven out by the Israelites; and as that country bordered upon Syria, they were called Syro-Phœnicians by the Greeks and Romans. It was to this tribe that the woman belonged. She was a daughter of that corrupt stock whom the Jews were commissioned to exterminate. But, besides being by nation a Canaanite, she was a Greek; this word describing not her country, but her creed. She was a heathen, an idolatress—all such, of whatever country, being then called

Greeks by the Jews. Such, then, by birth, by pedigree, by religious faith and profession was this woman, the first and only Gentile—a Canaanite besides—who made a direct personal appeal for help to Christ. The only case of a like kind that meets us in the Galilean ministry was that of the Roman centurion. But he was half a Jew. Moreover, living among Jews, he had his case presented to Jesus by the rulers of the Jews, who had the plea to offer on his behalf, that he loved their nation, and had built them a synagogue. Here, however, is a Gentile, living among Gentiles, who has no Jewish friends to intercede for her, no services rendered to the Jewish people to point to. It is a pure and simple case of one belonging to the great world of heathendom coming to Jesus. How is she received? Her case, as she presents it to his notice, is of the very kind that we should have said he would be quickest to sympathize with and relieve. Meeting him by the way, she cries out, in all the eagerness of passionate entreaty, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously

vexed with a devil." Jesus had opened willingly his ear to the nobleman of Capernaum pleading for his son; to Jairus pleading for his daughter; the very sight of the widow of Nain weeping over the bier of her only son had moved him, unasked, to interfere. Here is another parent interceding for a child. And that child's condition is one of the most pitiable—in the tender years of girlhood visited with the most frightful of all maladies, in one of the worst of its forms, —grievously tormented with a devil. Such a mother, in the agony of such a grief, crying out to him to have compassion upon her, and upon her poor afflicted child, will surely not have long to wait. But he hears as though he heard not. He answers her not a word. The kindest of men are not always equally open-eared, open-hearted, or open-handed to the tale of sorrow. Take them at some unlucky moment, and a cool or a rough reception may await the most clamant of appeals. Has anything like this happened to our Lord? Has his spirit been fretted with that late contention with the Pharisees, wearied and worn with the kind of reception his own had

given him, so that ear, and heart, and hand are all, for the time, shut up against this new and unexpected appeal of the stranger? It cannot be. Liable as he was to all common human frailties, our Lord was subject to no such moral infirmity as that. Disappointment, chagrin, disgust never operated upon him as they do so frequently on us, never quenched the benevolence of his nature, nor laid it even momentarily asleep. We must look elsewhere for the solution of the mystery of the silence—for mystery it was. The disciples noticed it with wonder. Their Master had never acted so since they had joined him, had never treated another as he is treating the Canaanite. But though her cry be thus received, making apparently no impression, moving him to no response, she follows, she repeats her cry; continues crying, till half in real pity for her and half with the selfish wish to be rid of her importunity, the disciples came to him, saying, "Send her away, for she crieth after us," not that they wanted her to be summarily dismissed, her request ungranted. Christ's answer to this application shows that he did not understand it in

that sense; that he took it as expressive of their desire that he should do what she desired and then dismiss her.

A rare thing this in the history of our Saviour, that he should even seem to be less tender in his sympathy for the afflicted than his disciples were; that he should need to be importuned by them to deed of charity. But all is rare here; rare his silence, rare their entreaty, and rare too the next step or stage of the incident. Still heedless of the woman—neither looking at her, nor speaking to her, nor apparently feeling for her—Jesus answers his disciples by saying to them, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." He gives this as his reason for paying no attention to this Gentile's request. And it is so quietly and calmly said that it looks like the expression of a firm and settled purpose. The poor suitor hears it. Does it not at once and for ever quench all hope within her breast? His silence might have been due to the absorption of his thoughts with other things. It might be difficult to win the attention or fix it on one who had so little claim on his regard. But now she

knows that he has heard, has thought of her, but wilfully, deliberately, as it would seem, has waved her suit aside. Child of a doomed rejected race, well mightest thou have taken the Saviour's words as a final sentence, cutting off all hope, sending thee back without relief to thy miserable home, to nurse thy frenzied child in the arms of a dull despair. But there was in thee a depth of affection for that poor child of thine, and a tenacity of purpose that will not let thee give up the case till effort after effort be made. There is in thee, more than this, a keenness of intelligence, a quickness to discern, that, adverse as it looked, an absolute refusal did not lie wrapped up in the Saviour's utterance. He is not sent to any but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but does that bind him to reject the stray sheep of another fold, if perchance it may flee to him for succour? He comes as a servant, with instructions to confine his personal ministry to the children of a favoured race. But is he not a son too as well as a servant? Are his instructions so binding that in no case he may go by a hand's-breadth beyond their line, when so going may serve to further the

great objects of his earthly mission? She will try at least whether she cannot persuade him to do so. Undauntedly she follows him into the house into which she sees that he has entered, casts herself at his feet, and says, "Lord, help me!" Before, she had called him Son of David, had given him the title that, from intercourse with Jewish neighbours, she knew belonged to him as the promised Messiah. But now she drops this title. As the Son of David, he was not sent but to the Jews. She calls him, as she worships, by the wider name, that carries no restriction in it, gently intimating that as sovereign Lord of all, he might rise above his commission, and go beyond the letter of the instructions he had received. Lord, she says, as she looks up, adoringly, beseechingly—Lord, help me. She has got him at last to fix his eye upon her. Will he, can he refuse to help? Jesus looks and says, "Let the children first be filled. It is not meet to take the children's meat, and to cast it to dogs." Last and worst repulse. Bad enough to be told that she lay without the limits of his commission; but worse to be numbered

with the dogs. Yet still she falters not. She accepts at once the reality, the justice, the propriety of the distinction drawn. In the one household there were the children of the family, there were also the dogs, and it was right that they should be fed at different times on different food. In the great human household differences of a like kind existed; there were the favoured sons of Abraham; there were the outcast children of Ham and Japhet. She neither disputes the fact nor quarrels with those arrangements of Divine Providence under which a different treatment had been given to them,—she takes the lowly place that Christ has given her among the outcast tribes—among the dogs! But have not the dogs and the children all one master? Do they not dwell all beneath one roof? May not even the dogs look for some little kindnesses at their master's hands? The finest and the choicest of the food it is right that the children should have, but are there no fragments for them? "Truth, Lord," she says, venturing in the boldness of her ardent faith to take up the image that Jesus had used or had suggested, and to construct

out of it an argument, as it were, against himself —"Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table."

"Truth, Lord, but thou art the Master; and there dwells in thee such a kind and loving heart, that I will not believe,—no, not though thine own words and deeds may seem to declare it,— that the meanest creature in thy household will be overlooked or unprovided for. Truth, Lord, I am not a child, and I ask not, expect not, deserve not, a child's favour at thine hands. I am but as a dog before thee, and it is no part of the children's food, it is but a crumb from thy richly furnished table that I crave; and what but such among all the rich and varied blessings that thou hast come to lavish upon thine own—what but such would be the having mercy upon the like of me, and healing my poor afflicted child?" The Saviour's end is gained. It was a peculiar case, and Christ had met it in a peculiar fashion. He was about, still more distinctly and conspicuously than he had done in the case of the Roman officer, by act and deed of his own hand, to unfold the mystery that had been hid for ages,

that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs with the Jews of the great spiritual inheritance of his purchase. In doing so he desired to make it patent upon what ground and principle the door of entrance was to be thrown open. Here was a Canaanitish woman applying to him for help. The curing of her daughter was to be the token that however limited for the time his own personal ministry was to be, it was not to be fixedly and for ever exclusive in its character—confined alone to Jews. Here was a Canaanitish woman about to be numbered with those on whose behalf his Divine power went forth to heal. To vindicate her admission within the sphere of his gracious operations, it was to be made manifest that she too, by faith, was a daughter of faithful Abraham. Therefore it was that her faith was subjected to such repeated trial, that impediment after impediment was thrown before it, that it might be thoroughly tested, and come forth from the ordeal shining in the lustre of the fullest and brightest manifestations.

"O woman," said Jesus to her, when the trial was over and the triumph complete, "O woman,

great is thy faith!" Many things beside had there been to commend in her,—her strong maternal love, her earnestness, her importunity, her perseverance, her deep humility. Over all these the Saviour passes, or rather he traces them all up to their common root,—her faith in him, her trust under all discouragements—in front of all difficulties—in opposition even to his own words and acts; her trust in his good-will to her, in his disposition to pity and to help. This is what he commends, admires. Two instances only are recorded in which Jesus passed such an approving judgment, and looked with such admiring regard upon the faith of those who came to him; and it is remarkable that they are those of the two Gentiles—the Roman Centurion and the Syro-Phœnician woman. "Verily," said he of the one, "I have not found so great faith; no, not in Israel!" "Woman," said he to the other, "great is thy faith!" Great faith was needed in those who were the first to force the barrier that ages had thrown up between Jew and Gentile, and great faith in these instances was displayed. Of the two, however, that of

the purely Gentile woman was the highest in its character and the noblest in its achievements. The Roman's faith was in the unlimitedness of Christ's power—a power he believed so great that even as he said to his soldiers "Go!" and they went; "Come!" and they came; "Do this!" and they did it,—so could Jesus say to disease, and life, and death; curing at a distance! saving, by the simple word of his power! The faith of the Canaanite was not simply in the unlimited extent of Christ's power. His power she never for a moment doubted. He had no reason to say to her, Believest thou that I am able to do this? But his willingness he himself gave her some reason to doubt. Thousands placed as she was would have doubted,—thousands tried as she was would have failed. Which of us has a faith in Jesus of which we are quite sure that it would come through such a conflict unscathed? In her it never seems for a moment to have faltered. In spite of his mysterious, unexampled silence,—of the explanation given of the silence that appeared to exclude,—beneath the sentence that assigned her a place among the dogs, her faith lived on,

with a power in it to penetrate the folds of that dark mantle which the Lord for a short season drew around him—to know and see that behind the assumed veil of coldness, silence, indifference, repulse, reproach, there beat the willing, loving heart, upon whose boundless benevolence she casts herself, trusting, and not being afraid. This was her confidence, that there was more love to her in his heart than the outward conduct of Jesus might seem to indicate. It was this confidence which sustained her from first to last. It was this confidence which carried her over all the obstructions thrown successively before her. It was this confidence which sharpened her wit, and gave her courage to snatch out of Christ's own hand the weapon by which her last and greatest victory was won. It was this confidence in him, in spite of all adverse appearances, which pleased the Lord so much,—for he likes, as we all do, to be trusted in,—and which drew from him the unwonted expression at once of approval and of admiration, "O woman, great is thy faith!" It is the same kind of simple trust in Jesus that we all need; and in us too, if we but had it in

like degree, it would accomplish like blessed results. What the silence and the sentences of Jesus were to that entreating woman, crying after Jesus to have her poor child cured, his ways and his dealings, in providence and in grace, are to us crying after him for the healing of our own or others' spiritual maladies. We cry, but he answers not a word; we entreat, but he turns upon us a frowning countenance; when he speaks, his words seem to cut us off from comfort and from help. But deal as he may with us, hide himself as he may, speak roughly as he may, let us still believe that there exists in the heart of our Redeemer a love to us, upon which we can at all times cast ourselves in full unbounded trust.

"Woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."

XIII.

THE CIRCUIT THROUGH DECAPOLIS.[1]

WE have now to follow Jesus through one of the most singular of his journeyings. His work in Galilee was done, but some days still were left ere he set his face to go up to Jerusalem. These days were devoted to a circuit which carried him in a semicircle round the western, northern, and eastern boundaries of Galilee, keeping him outside the jurisdiction of Herod, and beyond the reach of the Jewish hierarchy. He was seeking for rest, seclusion, security, and he found them where neither the mistaken attachment of his friends, nor the hate of his enemies in Galilee, were likely to follow him. First he travelled over the hilly country that lies to the north-west of the Sea of Tiberias. There, as he was passing out of the Galilean territory, he met the Syro-

[1] Matt. xv. 29-39; xvi. 1-12; Mark vii. 31-37; viii. 1-26.

Phœnician woman, and by the manner of his treatment of her revealed at once the simplicity, humility, tenacity of her faith, and the wide embrace of his own love and power. Crossing the boundary-line that divided Palestine from Phœnicia, passing the ancient city of Tyre, he proceeded northward towards Sidon, getting a glimpse there—it may have been a first and last one—of a country in which some of the most ancient forms of heathenism still subsisted, in the worship of Baal and Astarte. Then, turning eastward, he crossed the southern ridge of Lebanon, descended into the valley of the Leontes, skirted the base of the snow-capped Hermon, and somewhere not far from the sources of the Jordan, entered Decapolis. This was the name given to a large and undefined region which lay around ten cities, to which peculiar privileges were granted by the Romans after their conquest of Syria. All of these, with a single exception, lay to the east and south-east of the Sea of Galilee. At length he came upon that sea, touching it somewhere along its eastern shore, not far, it may have been, from the place where he once before, crossing from Capernaum,

had landed for a few hours, and where he cured the demoniac of Gadara. At the entreaty of the multitude Jesus had then instantly retired, not suffering the man upon whom the cure had been wrought to accompany him, but directing him to go and tell what had happened to his family and friends. "And he departed," we are told, "and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him; and all did marvel." The rumour of that miracle was still fresh, the wonder it had excited had not died away, when, coming through the midst of the coast of Decapolis, Jesus sat down upon one of the mountains that overlook the lake. The community through which he had been moving was more than half heathenish, the Jewish faith and worship having but little hold eastward of the river and the lake. Christ's appearance for the first time among this rude and essentially Gentile population, and the readiness with which he healed the deaf man that had an impediment in his speech, produced the very effect which in such circumstances might have been anticipated. "Great multitudes came to him, having with them those that were lame,

blind, dumb, maimed, and many others," eagerly but somewhat roughly casting them down at the feet of Jesus; wondering as at an altogether new sight, beyond measure astonished when they saw the dumb made to speak, and the blind to see, and the lame to walk, and glorifying, not any of their own idols, but glorifying the God of Israel, in whose name and by whose power these great works were done.[1]

Three days they crowded in upon Jesus, till about four thousand men, beside women and children, were around him on the mountain side. Many of them had come from a distance, and the food that they had brought with them was exhausted. That they might not go fasting away from him, to faint, it might be, on the road, Jesus repeated the miracle he had once wrought before, on the same side of the lake, but at a different season of the year, and for an entirely different sort of people. Among the coincidences and the differences in the narratives which the evangelists have given of these two miraculous feedings of the multitudes, there is one not preserved in our

[1] Matthew xv. 30, 31.

English version. After the five thousand were fed with the five loaves and the two fishes, the disciples, we are told, took up twelve baskets full of fragments. After the four thousand were fed with the seven loaves and the few small fishes, seven baskets full of fragments were gathered. In the Greek tongue there are two different words, describing two vessels of different size and structure, both of which, without any mark of distinction between them, our translators of the Bible have rendered into the English word "basket." It is one of these words which invariably and exclusively is used in describing the first miracle, and the other which is as invariably and exclusively used in describing the second. The employment in the two cases of two different kinds of vessel has thus been distinctly marked and preserved as one of the slighter circumstantial peculiarities by which the two events were distinguished from one another.

The multitude having been fed and sent away, Jesus took ship and sailed across the lake, landing on its western shores between Tiberias and Capernaum. He had scarcely reappeared in the

neighbourhood in which most of his wonderful works had been wrought, when, once again, in their old spirit of contemptuous challenge, the Pharisees demand that he would show them a sign from heaven. Now, however, for the first time, the Sadducees appear by their side, leaguing themselves with the Pharisees in a joint rejection of Christ—in slighting all that he had already said and done—in counting it insufficient to substantiate any claim on his part to be their Messiah, and in demanding the exhibition of some great wonder in the heavens, such as, misreading some of the ancient prophecies, they falsely thought should precede Christ's advent. Saddened and vexed, with a word of stern rebuke to the men who stood tempting him, and a deep sigh heaved over the whole village to which they belonged, Jesus abruptly departed, embarking in such haste that the disciples forgot to furnish themselves with more than a single loaf. As they landed on the other side, Jesus charged them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. The pitiful simplicity which they displayed in failing to see what Jesus meant,

and in imagining that because he had used the word "leaven," it must be their having failed to bring bread enough with them that he was pointing at, stirred the gentle spirit of their Master, and led him to administer a more than ordinarily severe rebuke, the main weight of which was laid, not upon their stupidity in not understanding him, but in their want of trust, their forgetting how the many thousands had been provided for in the desert and on the mountain side.

At Bethsaida, to which place Jesus went on his way to Cæsarea Philippi, they brought a blind man to him, and besought him to touch him. This case, and that of the deaf and stammering man brought to him in Decapolis, have many points of resemblance. In both, those who brought the diseased to Jesus prescribed to him the mode of cure. They besought him to lay his hand upon them, or to touch them. Was it for the very purpose of reproving and counteracting the prejudice which connected the cure with a certain kind of manipulation on the part of the curer, that Jesus in both instances went so far out of his usual course, varying the manner of

his action so singularly, that out of all his miracles of healing these two stand distinguished by the unique mode of their performance? This at least is certain, that had Jesus in any instance observed one settled and uniform method of healing, the spirit of formalism and superstition which lies so deep in our nature would have seized upon it, and linked it inseparably with the divine virtue that went out of him, confounding the channel with the thing that the channel conveyed. More and more as we ponder the life of our Redeemer, dwelling particularly on those parts of it—such as his institution of the sacraments—in which food might have been furnished upon which the spirit of formalism might have fed, more and more do we wonder at the pains evidently taken to give to that strong tendency of our nature as little material as possible to fasten on.

Besides, however, any intention of the kind thus alluded to, the variations in our Lord's outward modes of healing may have had special adaptation to the state of the individuals dealt with, and may have been meant to symbolize the

great corresponding diversity that there is in those spiritual healings of which the bodily ones were undoubtedly intended to be types. Let us imagine that the deaf stammerer of Decapolis was a man whose spiritual defects were as complicated as his physical ones; whose hard, unclean heart it was singularly difficult to reach and to renew; who required repeated efforts to be made, and a varied instrumentality to be employed, before he yielded to the power of the truth, or was brought under its benignant sway. Then see with what picturesque fidelity and appropriateness the slowness and difficulty of the one kind of healing was shadowed forth in the other. Jesus took him aside from the multitude, went away with him alone into some quiet and secluded place. The very isolation—the standing thus alone face to face, was of itself fitted to arrest, to concentrate the man's thoughts upon what was about to happen. Then Jesus put his fingers into his ears, as if by this very action he meant to indicate the need there was of an operation which should remove the obstruction, and that his was the hand to do it. Then

with a like intent he touched the man's dry and withered tongue with fingers moistened with his own spittle. Then he looked up to heaven and sighed—the sigh unheard—but the look upward, and the emotion which it conveyed, not lost upon the man. Then after all these preliminaries, in course of which we may believe that whatever of incredulity or whatever of unbelief there may have lain within was being gradually subdued, at last he said *Ephphatha,* and the ears were opened and the tongue was loosed.

Two things here were peculiar, the sigh and the preserving the old Aramaic word which Jesus used. Never in any other instance but in this, when Jesus was about to heal, did a sigh escape from his lips. What drew it forth here? It may have been that as he drew the man aside and confronted him alone, the sorrowful spectacle that he presented became to the quick sympathies of Jesus suddenly and broadly suggestive of all the ills that flesh is heir to, and that it was over them collectively that the sigh was heaved. Such interpretation of its meaning leaves unexplained why it was this case, and it alone, which acted

in such a manner upon the sympathies of the Redeemer. But the sigh may have had a deeper source. If this were indeed a man whose soul was difficult of reach and cure, he may have presented himself to Jesus as the type and emblem of those obstinate cases of spiritual malady, some of which would so long resist the great remedy that he came to the earth to furnish.

After the sigh came the utterance *Ephphatha*, a word belonging to that dialect of the old Hebrew language called the Aramaic, or Syro-Chaldaic, which was then current in Judea. But if that was the language which Christ ordinarily used—in which, for example, the Sermon on the Mount was spoken—why was it that in this and one or two other instances, and in these alone, the exact words which Christ employed are preserved in the evangelic record? It cannot be the peculiarity or solemnity of the occasion, or the particular emphasis with which they were spoken, that entitled them to be selected and preserved, for we can point to many other occasions in which, had Jesus used Aramaic words, they should have had as good, indeed a better claim to have been

preserved. The true explanation of this matter seems to be that it was only upon a few rare occasions that Jesus did employ the old vernacular tongue—and that he ordinarily spoke in Greek. It has recently, and as I think conclusively, been established by a great variety of proof, that in the days of our Saviour, the Jews knew and spoke two languages; all the grown-up educated population using the Greek as well as the Aramaic tongue. The Greek predominated in the schools, was employed almost exclusively in written documents and by public speakers. It was in this language that Jesus addressed the crowds in the courts of the temple at Jerusalem, and the multitudes on the hill-sides of Galilee. We have, therefore, in our Greek New Testament the very words before us which came from the lips of our Redeemer,—more sacred, surely, than if they had been translated from the Aramaic, however faithful the rendering. Assuming that Greek was the language ordinarily employed by our Saviour, it would very naturally occur that occasionally he reverted to the old dialect, and that when he did so the words that he used should have been

preserved and interpreted. Thus, for instance, in the house of Jairus, Jesus was in the home of a strictly Jewish family, in which the old language would be used in all domestic intercourse, the little daughter who lay dead there having not yet learned perhaps the newly imported tongue. "How beautifully accordant then with the character of him whose heart was tenderness itself, that as he leant over the lifeless form of the maiden, and breathed that life-giving whisper into her ear, it should have been in the loved and familiar accents of the mother tongue, saying, 'Talitha cumi!' Although dead and insensible the moment before the words were uttered, yet ere the sound of them passed away there was life and sensibility within her. Does not every reader therefore perceive the thoughtful tenderness of the act, and a most sufficient reason why it was in Hebrew and not in Greek that our Lord now addressed her? And do we not also discover a cause why the fact of his having done so should be especially noticed by the evangelist? Are we not thus furnished with a new and affecting example of our Saviour's graciousness? And

do we not feel that St. Mark, the most minutely descriptive of all the Evangelists, deserves our gratitude for having taken pains to record it? Softly and sweetly must the tones of that loving voice, speaking in the language of her childhood, have fallen upon the sleeping spirit of the maiden, and by words of tenderness, no less than words of power, was she thus recalled to life and happiness."[1]

It was perhaps still more natural that Jesus, in addressing the deaf stammerer of Decapolis, should have used an Aramaic word. He was a rude mountaineer. The vernacular was perhaps the only language of which he had any knowledge. At any rate, it was the one to which he had been the most accustomed. It could have been solely with a regard to the man himself that Jesus employed the particular term *Ephphatha*. He meant him to hear and understand it. And it was heard, we believe, and understood; for this was not a case in which the faculty of hearing and speaking had never existed or been exercised. So soon as the physical impediments

[1] See Roberts' *Discussions on the Gospel*, pp. 89, 90.

were removed, the man could speak as he had spoken before the loss of hearing had been incurred. When, after all the other signs of the coming cure had been given, the emphatic word was at last pronounced, how wise, how gracious was it that that word—the first heard after so many years—should have been one of his well-known, well-loved mother-tongue!

But let us turn now for a moment to the cure of the blind man at Bethsaida. Here, too, we may believe that there was something special in the spiritual condition of the man meant to be typified by the manner of his cure. In the taking of him by the hand, the leading out of the town, the spitting upon his eyes, and putting his hands upon him, Jesus may have had the same objects in view which he had in acting in a similar manner with the deaf man at Decapolis, and the man born blind in Jerusalem; but there was a singularity that marks this case off from all the others. It is the only instance of progress in a cure by half and half, of an intermediate stage in the first instance reached. Jesus asked him if he saw aught. He looked

up and said that he saw men as trees walking. He saw them—knew them to be men—noticed and described their motion; but they were shapeless to his eye—looked rather like trees than men. It is this circumstance which leads us to believe that he had not been blind from birth. To endow a man born blind with the full powers of vision requires a double miracle—one upon the bodily organ, restoring to it its powers; one upon the mind, conferring upon it the faculty that in the years of infancy a long education is required to impart. A youth who had been blind from birth was couched by Cheselden; but at first and for some time he could not distinguish one object from another, however different in shape or size. He had to be told what the things were, with whose forms he had been familiar from feeling, and slowly learned to recognise them. And slowly was it that we all in our earliest days learned how to use the eye, and turn it into the instrument of detecting the forms and the magnitudes and the distances of the objects by which we were surrounded. But here—unless, indeed, we believe

that there was a double miracle—so soon as the man got the full power of bodily vision, he knew how to use it, having learnt that art before. It pleased the Saviour, however, to convey again its lost powers to the organ of the eye step by step. There is at first a confusion of the outward forms of things arising from some visional defect. That defect removed, all was clear; and the subject of this miracle rejoiced in the exercise of a long-unused and almost-forgotten faculty. It stands a solitary kind of cure in the bodily healings of our Lord; but that of which it is the type is by no means so rare. Rather, the rare thing is when anything like full power of spiritual perception is at once bestowed. It is but slowly here that the lost power comes back—that the eye opens to a true discernment of the things of that great spiritual world of which we form a part—sees them in their exact forms, in their relative magnitudes, distances, proportions. Even after the inward eye has been purged of all those films which limit and obscure its sight, a long, a careful, a painstaking education is required to train it, as our bodily one in infancy was trained.

Nor let us wonder if along the many stages of which this education is made up, we often make singular discoveries of how blind we were before to what afterwards seems clear as day, or that the operations are often painful by which a truer, and a deeper, and a wider spiritual discernment is attained. It is the blessed office of our Saviour at once to restore to the inward eye its power, and to teach us how to use it. Into his hands let us ever be putting ourselves; and let us quietly and gratefully submit to that discipline by which our training in the exercise of all our spiritual faculties is carried on.

XIV.

THE APOSTOLIC CONFESSION AT CÆSAREA-PHILIPPI.[1]

In the mythology of the Greeks the worship of Pan—their silvan deity—was always associated with shady cave or woody grotto. The first Grecian settlers in Northern Syria lighted there upon a spot singularly suited for such a worship—a cave at the southern base of Mount Hermon, and at the north-eastern extremity of the valley of the Jordan. This cave lay immediately behind a raised yet retired nook or hollow among the hills, and immediately beneath a conical height of more than 1000 feet, rising between two of those deep ravines which run up into the great mountain, upon the summit of which height there now stand the noblest ruins that the whole country around exhibits, equal in extent, if not

[1] Matt. xvi. 13-19.

in grandeur, to those of Heidelberg—the ruins of the Saracen Castle of Zubeibeh. Immediately beneath the entrance into this cave—along a breadth of more than 100 feet—there gush forth from among the stones a thousand bubbling rills of water, coming from some hidden fountain-head, and from their long dark subterranean journey springing all joyously together into the light of day, forming at once by their union a stream which is one of the chief heads or sources of the Jordan. This lively and full-born stream does instantly a stream's best eastern work—clothes its birthplace with exuberant fertility, shadowing it with the foliage of the ilex and the olive; covering its green swards with flowers of every name, turning it into such a scene that, lost in admiration, Miss Martineau declares that out of Poussin's pictures, she never saw anything in the least like it, while Dr. Stanley calls it a Syrian Tivoli.

This chosen spot the first Grecian settlers seized upon and consecrated, making the cave Pan's sanctuary, cutting niches for the nymphs out of the solid rock which forms the face of the

mountain side; which niches—the statues that once occupied them gone—are still to be seen there; and called the place Panias, from the name of the deity there worshipped. The Romans when they came did not overturn this worship, but they added a new one. Returning to this beautiful nook, from having escorted Cæsar Augustus to the sea, Herod the Great erected a fine temple of white marble to his great patron. One of his sons, Herod Philip, in whose territory, as Tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis, it was included, extended and embellished the town which had grown up near the old cavern sanctuary. Thinking to change its name, he called it Cæsarea-Philippi, in honour of the Roman Emperor, with his own name added, to distinguish it from the Cæsarea of the sea-coast. This new name it bore for a few generations, but the old one revived again, and still belongs to it under the Arabic form of Banias.

It was to this Banias, or Cæsarea-Philippi, that our Lord proceeded, passing through Bethsaida, and up along the eastern banks of the Jordan. In that circuit already described he may have visited it, and the attractions of the place may

have drawn him back, or this may have been his first and only visit. It can scarcely be believed that he came into the few scattered villages which lay around, and the remains of which are still visible, without entering Cæsarea-Philippi itself. His presence there, out of Judea, in a district covered with tokens of heathen worship, his standing before that cave, his gazing upon those buildings, those niches, those inscriptions, now in ruins and defaced, but then telling, in their freshness, of idolatries still in living power, carries Jesus further away from Judaism, and brings him into nearer outward contact with Gentile worship than any other position in which we see him in the Gospel narrative. It were presumptuous in us, where no clue is given, to imagine what the thoughts and intents of the Saviour were; yet when we find him going so far out of his way, choosing this singular district as the place of his temporary sojourn after all his public labours in Galilee were over; when we reflect further that now a new stage of his ministry was entered on, and that henceforth from teaching the multitudes he withdrew, and gathering his disciples around

him in private, began to speak to them as he had never done before, it is impossible to refrain from cherishing the idea that, surrounded now by the emblems of various faiths and worships, types of the motley forms of superstition that had spread all over the earth, the thoughts of the Redeemer took within their wide embrace that world whose faith and worship he had come to purify, and that he had, in fact, purposely chosen, as in harmony with this epoch of his life, and the purposes he was about to execute, the unique, secluded, romantic district of Cæsarea-Philippi.

He was wandering in one of its lonely roads with his disciples, his sole companions, when he left them for a little while to engage in solitary prayer,[1] to commit himself and his great work, as it was passing into a new stage, to his Father in heaven. On rejoining them, he put to them the question, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" He knew it already, but for a further purpose he would fain have from their lips what the gross result of those two years' toil and teaching was—what the ideas were about himself, his

[1] Luke ix. 18.

person, character, and office, which his fellow-countrymen now generally entertained. They told him—more than one of them taking part in the reply—that some said that he was John the Baptist; some that he was Elias; some Jeremiah; some, without determining which, that he was one of the prophets. His own immediate followers may have got somewhat further in their conceptions. Listening to and believing in, though not fully understanding, the testimony of the Baptist, Andrew might say to his own brother Simon, "We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ;" and Nathanael, remembering what the voice from heaven at the baptism had been reported as declaring, might exclaim, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God: thou art the King of Israel." Here and there, by dumb and blind men, and Syro-Phœnician women, he might be hailed as the Son of David, or the Son of God. On the first impulse of their wonder at all being miraculously fed, five thousand men might be ready in the moment to say of him, that he was the prophet that should come into the world. But these were the exceptions, exceptions

so rare, that they seemed not to his disciples worthy of account. Amid all the variety of impressions made upon them by the discourses and works of our Lord, the great mass of the people in Judea and in Galilee regarded Jesus as the Messiah's forerunner, or one of his heralds, not as the Messiah himself. It was the popular belief of the period, that prior to the Messiah's advent one or other of the prophets was to rise again from the dead. This Jesus might be he. The Pharisees had not succeeded in shaking the public confidence in him as a pure and holy man, well worthy to be counted as a prophet. But they had prevailed in scattering the first impressions that the Baptist's ministry and his own words and deeds had created, that he was indeed the Christ. And now from the lips of his own followers Jesus hears what was so well fitted to try their faith and their Master's patience, that scarcely anywhere over all the land was there any recognition of the Messiahship of Jesus.

On getting their answer, no word of reproach or complaint escapes the Saviour's lips. It was not indeed on his own account, it was on theirs,

that his first question had been put. He follows it with the second and more pointed one: "But whom say ye that I am?" Peter, the ever-ready answerer, replies, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Peter had believed, from the beginning of his connexion with him, that Jesus was the Christ; a faith which had the great and acknowledged authority of the Baptist to rest on, and which was borne up by the hope that the whole nation would speedily accept him as such. But in the Baptist's death, that authority has been violently shaken, and the outward and expected support has utterly given way. Many of the Lord's disciples have forsaken him, and looking all around, Peter can find few now who so believe. Yet, amid all the prevailing unbelief in and rejection of his Master, Peter's faith has been gaining and not losing strength. Like the inhabitants of Sychar, he believed not because of what any one had told him, but upon the ground of what he himself had seen and heard and known of Jesus. "*Thou art the Christ.*" Such the Baptist said thou wert—such, though thou hast never expressly put forth the claim—such thy words

and works have been ever asserting thee to be—and such thou truly art. Thus it is that in his good confession Peter suffers not the fickle faith and low conceptions of the multitude to affect him. Though he and his few companions stand alone, with the whole community against them, for himself and for them he will speak out and say, "Thou art"—not any one of those prophets, however honourable the name he bears—"Thou art the very Christ himself—the Messiah promised to our fathers."

But still another step, in taking which Peter not only confronts the existing state of popular belief as to who Jesus is, but he goes far on in advance of the existing Jewish faith as to who and what their Messiah was to be. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." We know from sufficient testimony that the Jews universally imagined that their Messiah was to be but a man—distinguished for his virtues and exalted in his office, but still a man. There has dawned on Peter's mind the idea that Jesus the Christ is something more—something higher. The voice from heaven had called him the Son

of God; Satan and his host had taken up and repeated the epithet. What that title fully meant we may not, cannot, think that Peter now, or till long afterwards, understood; but that it indicated some mysterious indwelling of the Divinity—some mysterious link between Jesus and the Father which raised him high above the level of our ordinary humanity, even when endowed with all prophetic gifts—he was beginning to comprehend. Obscure though his conceptions were, there stood embodied in his great confession a testimony to the mingled humanity and divinity of Jesus. In the faith which thus expressed itself Jesus saw the germ of all that living faith by which true believers of every age were to be animated—that faith the cherishing of which within its bosom was to form the very life and strength of the community, the Church, which he was to gather out from among the nations—the fruit of God's own work within human souls. Seeing this, and being so far satisfied—rejoicing in the assurance that whatever other men might think or say of him, there were even now some human spirits within which he had got a hold,

that nothing could shake, against which nothing would prevail—he turns to Peter and he says, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona." Simon Bar-jona!—the very way in which he named him preparing us for words of weighty import being about to be addressed to him. Simon Bar-jona, *blessed* art thou! I know not if Jesus Christ ever pronounced such a special individual blessing on any other single man; and when we hear one of our race called blessed by him who knows so well wherein the best and highest happiness of our nature consists, our ear opens wide to catch the reason given for such a benediction being pronounced. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Thine own eye hath not seen it, thine own ear hath not heard it—it hath not come to thee by any ordinary channel from without—it is not due alone to an exercise of thine own spirit within. Faint though the light be that has gleamed in upon thy soul, and lighted up thy faith—faint as the feeblest glimmer of the morn—it is a light from heaven, a dawn giving promise of a bright and

cloudless day. It hath come to thee as a revelation from the great Father of Spirits to thy spirit, Simon Bar-jona; and therefore a blessed man art thou! And blessed still in the Saviour's judgment—blessed beyond all that this world has in it of blessedness to bestow—is he upon whose darkened mind and heart the faintest rays of that same heavenly light have shone—the God who commanded the light to shine out of the darkness, shining in upon his soul, giving him the light of the true knowledge of God in Christ his Saviour!

"And I say also unto thee"—Thou hast said to me, "Thou art the Christ," and hast shown that thou knowest what is the true meaning of the word, so now say I unto thee, "Thou art Peter;" the name of my own giving, the fitness of whose application to thee thou art even now justifying in thy prompt and bold confession, in thy full and resolute faith, in thy firm and immovable adhesion to me, despite of all that men think and say of me. Thou art a true *Petros*—a living stone built upon me, the true *Petra*, the living and eternal rock—the only sure foundation in which you and all may build their

trust and hopes. And upon thee, as such a stone resting on such a rock, as having so genuine and strong a faith in me as Son of Man and Son of God, I will build my Church. Because of this thine early, full, and heaven-implanted faith, thou shalt be honoured as one of the first foundation-stones on which my Church shall be erected. That Church shall be the congregation of men who share thy faith—who all are Peters like thyself—all living stones built upon me as the chief corner-stone; and in a sense, too, built upon thee; on prophets and apostles as laid by me and on me, to form the basis of the great spiritual edifice—the Temple of the Church.

But if the Church was to consist of those who believed in Jesus as Peter did, where was the promise that it should number many within its embrace? What the security that it should have any firm or lasting hold? Was Jesus not at this moment a wanderer—despised and rejected—driven forth from among his own—surrounded in this place of his voluntary exile among the Gentiles by a few poor fishermen? Where was the earthly hope that the circle of true believers in

him should widen? What the prospect that if it did, it could hold its ground against all the gathered enmity that was rising to pour itself out against it? Calmly out of the midst of all these unpropitious and unpromising appearances, the words issue from the lips of Jesus, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The history of eighteen centuries has confirmed the truth of the saying. So long has this society of Christian men existed; and though it has done much to provoke hostility, and been often very unmindful of the spirit and will of him whose name it bears, yet all that power and policy, the wiliest intrigues and the fiercest persecution could do against it, have been done in vain.

This is the first occasion on which Jesus used that word—the Church; and he named it in his own lifetime but once again. He did everything to lay the true and only foundation of that Church; but he did almost nothing with his own hand to erect or organize it. Apart from his selecting twelve men to be his personal associates, his institution of the office of the apostolate, which

there are but few who regard as an integral and perpetual part of the Church's organization—apart from that, and his appointment of the two sacraments, Jesus may be said to have done nothing towards the incorporation of those attached to him into an external institute. Even here, when he goes to address a few words of encouragement to Peter, upon whom so important services in this department were to devolve, he speaks not of the present but of the future :—"I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." When that time comes at which, on the great days of Pentecost, the first admissions into my Church by baptism shall take place, then know that the keys of my kingdom are in thine hand, and that thou mayest use them in the full assurance that thou art not acting without a due warrant. Keys are the badges of authority and power and trust, bestowed as the symbols of the office on ministers or ambassadors, secretaries or treasurers of kingdoms; on whom the duty lies of admitting to, or excluding from, the privileges and benefits of the commonwealth, disposing or withdrawing the royal bounties and favour. Such

keys—in a manner appropriate to the kind of commonwealth the Church is—Jesus here commits to Peter, as one of the first and greatest of its office-bearers. In the use of any such authority and power as had been given him within the Church—in admitting to or excluding from its privileges—in taking his part in the baptism of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost—in condemning Ananias and Sapphira—in censuring Simon Magus—in opening the door to take in the Gentile converts, and presiding at the baptisms in the household of Cornelius—Peter might be weighed down by the sense of the feebleness of the instrument he was using, the smallness of the effects that it could produce. To comfort and encourage him in the use of the keys when they came to be employed by him, Jesus adds, "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Act but in the right spirit—follow out the directions given—let the law of truth and love but regulate your doings—and you may rest assured that doings of yours on earth shall be approved and ratified in heaven.

So far, and no farther, as it seems to us, do the words of our Saviour, as addressed to Peter, go. You are aware that it is upon these words—and upon them almost exclusively, for there is no other passage of anything of a like import in the evangelic narrative—the Church of Rome claims for St. Peter and his alleged successors in the See of Rome a primacy or popedom over the universal Church of Christ. Upon this claim, so far as it is attempted to be erected upon this passage, I have to remark :—

1. It is singular that of the three Evangelists who have recorded our Lord's question to the apostles, and St. Peter's reply, St. Matthew is the only one who has added that which Jesus said to him after his good confession had been made. Had our Lord's object in putting the question been to elicit the confession in order thereupon to confer certain peculiar honours and privileges upon St. Peter above all the other twelve, would St. Mark and St. Luke have stopped short as they do at the confession, and said not a word about Peter and the rock—the keys and the kingdom? It is quite true that in many a narrative two of

the Evangelists omit what the third has recorded; but it is never true, as it would be true here if the Roman Catholic interpretation of the passage be adopted, that all three give the initial or introductory part of a narrative, but that one alone supplies that in which the main scope and object of the whole consists.

2. The claim for a primacy of authority over the other apostles, put forward on behalf of St. Peter, rests on the assumption that he, and he exclusively, is the rock upon which the Church is said to rest. I will only say that as a mere matter of exegesis—*i.e.*, of interpretation of words—it is extremely difficult to say precisely what the rock was to which Christ alluded. From the beginning, from Jerome and Origen down to our own times, there has been the greatest diversity of opinion. Did Jesus mean to say that Peter himself—individually and peculiarly—was the rock? or was it the confession that he had just made, or was it the faith to which he had given expression, or was Jesus pointing to himself when he spoke of this rock, as he did elsewhere when he spake of this temple—this shrine—in reference

to himself? I have already offered the explanation that appears to me the most simple and natural, as flowing not so much out of a critical examination of the words as out of a consideration of the peculiar circumstances and conditions under which the words were spoken; but I cannot say that I have offered that explanation without considerable hesitation—a hesitation mainly arising from the fact which does not appear in our English version, that Jesus used two different words—*Petros* and *Petra*—in speaking as he did to the Apostle. A claim which rests upon so ambiguous a declaration can scarcely be regarded as entitled to our support.

3. Whatever ambiguity there may be now to us, there could have been no such ambiguity in the words of Christ to those who heard them. They must have known whether or not Jesus meant to designate Peter as the rock—to elevate him to a peculiar and exalted position above his brethren. And yet we find that three times after this the dispute arises among them which should be the greatest—a dispute which never could have arisen had Jesus already openly and dis-

tinctly assigned the primacy to St. Peter—and a dispute, we may add, which never would have been settled as Jesus in each case settled it, had any such primacy been ever intended to be conveyed by him.

4. Even admitting that all that is said here was said personally and peculiarly of Peter, where is the warrant to extend it to his successors? If his associates—his fellow-apostles—be excluded, how can his successors be embraced? It is ingeniously said here by Romanists that if St. Peter be the foundation of the Church, then as that foundation must abide, there ever must be one to take his place and keep up as it were the continuity of the basis of the building. But this is to have, not one stone as the foundation, but a series of stones laid alongside or upon one another, and where is there a hint of such a thing?

5thly, and chiefly. All that is said here to Peter was said twice afterwards by Christ to all the twelve and to all the Church. You have but to turn to the 18th chapter of St. Matthew, and read there from the 18th to the 19th verse, and to the Gospel of St. John, and read there in the 20th

chapter, from the 19th to the 23d verse, to be fully satisfied that, put what interpretation you may upon the words spoken at Cæsarea-Philippi to St. Peter, they conveyed to him no power or privilege beyond that which Jesus conferred upon the entire college of the apostles, and in its collective capacity upon the Church.[1]

[1] See *The Forty Days after our Lord's Resurrection*, pp. 77-83.

XV.

THE REBUKE OF SAINT PETER.[1]

JESUS had tested the faith of the Apostles. Their reply to his pointed interrogation, "But whom say ye that I am?" was so far satisfactory. They had not been influenced either by the hostility of the Pharisees, or the low and unworthy imaginations of the people. They were ready to acknowledge the Messiahship of their Master, such as they understood it to be, and had risen even to some dim conception of his divinity. They were all ready to adopt the declaration of their spokesman as the expression of their faith, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

But in this faith of theirs there was one great and fatal defect. Neither they, nor any of their

[1] Matt. xvi. 21-28; Mark viii. 31-38; ix. 1; Luke ix. 22-27.

countrymen of that age, had associated with the advent of their Messiah any idea of humiliation, rejection, suffering unto death. Obscure he might be in his first appearances, and difficult of recognition; obstacles of various kinds might be thrown in his path, over which he might have laboriously to climb; but sooner or later the discovery of who and what he was would burst upon the people, and by general acclaim he would be exalted to his destined lordship over Israel. One, coming unto his own, and by his own received not; asking not, and getting not, any honour from men; walking in lowliness all his days; a man of many and deeply-hidden griefs, misunderstood by the great mass of the people, despised and rejected by their rulers, taken, at last, to be judged and condemned as a deceiver of the people, a vilifier of Moses, a blasphemer against God; crucified, at last, as a malefactor—it had never entered into their thoughts that such a one could be their Messiah. He might suffer somewhat, perhaps, at the hands of his own and Israel's enemies; possibly he might have to submit to death, the common lot of all men: but that he should suffer at

the hands of the very people over whom he came to reign, and that by their hands he should be put to death—no throne erected, and no kingdom won—this was not only alien from, it was utterly contradictory to, their conceptions and their belief. Yet all this was true; and from their earlier and false ideas the disciples had to be weaned. Jesus did this gradually. At first, during all his previous converse with them while engaged in his public labours in Judea and Galilee, he had carefully abstained from saying anything about his approaching sufferings and death. Not that these were either unforeseen or forgotten by him. When alone in the midnight interview with Nicodemus, he could speak plainly of his being lifted up upon the cross as the brazen serpent had been upon the pole in the wilderness, that whosoever looked upon him believingly might be saved. To the people of Judea and Galilee he could drop hints, which, however obscure to his hearers, tell us of a full knowledge and foresight on his part of all that awaited him. He could point to his body as to the temple, which, though destroyed, in three days he should raise up again. He could tell his

Galilean audience the sign that was to be given to that generation—that as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, the Son of man should be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. But never till now, in any of his private conversations with his disciples, had he alluded to this topic. He had allowed them to take off the natural and full impression which his teaching and miracle-working, and the whole tenor of his life and conversation, was fitted to make upon open, honest, devout-minded men. Their knowledge of him, their faith in him, he had left to grow, till now—as represented in the confession of St. Peter—it seemed strong enough to bear some pressure. They might now be told what it had been out of time to tell them earlier. And if they were to be told at all beforehand of the dark and tragic close, it would seem to be the very best and most fitting occasion to begin, at least, to make the disclosure to them now, when our Lord himself, ceasing from his public ministry, had sought these few days' quiet in the neighbourhood of Cæsarea-Philippi, that his own thoughts might be turned to all

that awaited him when he went up to Jerusalem. "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples how he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." A few days after this, as they descended from the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus charged Peter and James and John, saying, "Tell the vision to no man till the Son of man be risen from the dead." A few days later, while they were still in Galilee, passing through it so privately that it evidenced a desire that no man should know it,[1] Jesus said to his disciples, "Let these sayings sink down into your hearts, for the Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men, and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again." After the raising of Lazarus there was a brief retreat to Peræa, till the time of the last Passover drew on. There was something very peculiar in the whole manner and bearing of our Lord when, leaving this retreat, he set forth on his final journey to Jerusalem. He stepped forth before his disciples, "and they were

[1] Mark ix. 30.

amazed, and as they followed they were afraid." It was while they were on the way thus going up to Jerusalem that he took the twelve apart, and said to them, "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished; for he shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles, and they shall mock, and shall scourge, and shall spit upon, and shall crucify him, and the third day he shall rise again."[1] It thus appears that four times at least before the event—thrice in Galilee and once in Peræa—Jesus foretold with growing minuteness of detail his passion and death; specifying the place — Jerusalem; the time — the approaching Passover; the agents —the chief priests, scribes, and Gentiles; the course of procedure — his betrayal into the hands of the Jewish authorities, his delivery by them into the hands of the Gentiles; the manner of his death—crucifixion under a judicial sentence; some of the accompanying circum-

[1] Matt. xx. 17-19; Mark x. 32-34; Luke xviii. 31-34.

stances—the scourging, the mocking, the spitting. Any one placed in the position of Jesus —seeing the rising tide of bitter enmity, and knowing the goal at which it aimed—might have conjectured that nothing short of the death of their victim would appease the wrath of his enemies. But what mere human foresight could have foretold, at Cæsarea-Philippi, that Herod would not anticipate the sacerdotal party, and seize upon Jesus on his way through Galilee, and crown the Baptist's murder by that of his successor? What mere human foresight could have foretold that after so many previous attempts and failures, the one at the next Passover season would succeed; that Jesus would not perish, as Stephen did, in a tumultuous outbreak; that all the formalities of a trial and condemnation would be gone through, and death by crucifixion be the result? Nor will it help to furnish us with any natural explanation of these foretellings of his sufferings and death by Jesus, to say that he gathered them from the prophecies of the Old Testament, with which we know him to have been familiar, and to which, indeed, even in these fore-

tellings, he pointed; for, much as those prophecies did convey, they fell far short of that particularity which characterizes the sayings of our Lord. Receiving the account of the evangelists as genuine and true, we are shut up to the conclusion that in regard to his passion and death Jesus manifested beforehand a foreknowledge proper only to him who knows all ends from their beginnings; and that still more was this the case as to his resurrection, which he predicted still oftener, and could not have predicted in plainer or less ambiguous terms.

It may for a moment appear strange that the disciples were so taken by surprise when the death and the resurrection of their Master actually took place. How could this be, we are apt to ask ourselves, after such distinct and unambiguous declarations as those which we have quoted? Let us remember, however, that the same authority which instructs us that these predictions were uttered, informs us that they were not understood by those to whom they were in the first instance addressed. "They understood not the saying, and it was hid from them, and they feared

to ask him."[1] "And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean."[2] The words of Jesus were in themselves easy enough to understand; but was it figuratively or literally they were to be taken? We can scarcely judge aright of the perplexity into which so unexpected an announcement must have thrown the disciples at this stage of their acquaintance with Christ, nor understand how natural it was that they should explain them away. We so often see them, with other and less difficult subjects, taking what he meant literally as if it were figuratively spoken, and what he meant figuratively as if it were to be literally understood—that it takes the edge off our wonder that in this instance the disciples should have hesitated how to take the words that they had heard. The expression, "rising from the dead," the one that appears to have perplexed them the most, appears to us one of the simplest. Yet, when we put ourselves exactly in their position, we begin to see that they had more ground for their perplexity than

[1] Luke ix. 45. [2] Mark ix. 10.

is at first apparent. A raising from the dead was what they had themselves witnessed. In the general resurrection of the dead they believed. There was nothing, therefore, creating any difficulty in the way of their understanding the mere literal signification of the phrase—rising from the dead. But the resurrection of Jesus—what could it mean? It could not be his sharing in the general resurrection of all the dead that he was speaking of. But was he to die and to rise and to remain risen? or to die and to rise and to die again? He could raise others from the dead, but if he were to die, who was to raise him? Need we be surprised if, with their notions of who and what their Messiah was to be, the disciples should at times have believed that it was of some spiritual death and resurrection—some sinking into the grave and rising again of his cause and kingdom—that Jesus spoke?

At first, indeed, and before any time for reflecting upon it is given, St. Peter seizes upon the natural meaning of the words that he had heard, and interprets them generally as predicting suffering and death to his Master, and, offended

at the very thought of a future so different from the one that they all had anticipated, in the heat of his surprise and indignation, buoyed up, no doubt, by the praise that had just been bestowed upon him, he forgets himself so far as actually to lay hold by arm or garment of our Lord, and in the spirit of a patron, or protector, he begins to rebuke him, saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." Kindliness in the act and speech; a strong interest in Christ's mere personal welfare—but ignorance and presumption too; forgetfulness of the distance that separated him from Jesus, and a profound insensibility to the higher spiritual designs which the sufferings and death of Jesus were to be the means of accomplishing. Now let us mark the manner in which this interference is regarded and treated by Christ. He turns about—he looses himself from the too familiar hold—he looks on his disciples as if craving their special notice of what he was about to say and do—and by that look having engaged their fixed regard, he says to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence to me." What was the secret

of the quickness, the sharpness, the stern severity of this rebuke? Why was it that, for the moment, the Apostle disappeared as it were from the Saviour's view, and Satan, the arch-tempter, took his place? Why was it that the very word which our Lord had applied to Satan in the last and greatest of the temptations of the wilderness, is here used again, as if the great tempter had reappeared and renewed his solicitation? It was because he found the feet of Peter had actually stepped upon the very ground that Satan, in his great temptation of our Saviour, had occupied. Take all the kingdoms of the world—such had been the bribe held out—take them *now*—save thyself all the toil, the agony—let the cup pass from thee—step into the throne without touching or tasting the bitterness of the cross. Promptly, indignantly, was this temptation repelled in the wilderness; and when it reappears in the language of his Apostle, "Be it far from thee: this shall not be unto thee"—when once again he is tempted to shrink from the sufferings and the death in store for him—as promptly and as indignantly is it again repelled, Peter being regarded

as personating Satan in making it, and addressed even as the great tempter had been.

What a difference between the two sayings, uttered within a few minutes of each other! "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence"—or, as the word means, thou art a stumbling-stone, a rock of offence—"unto me." Can it be the same man to whom words of such different import are addressed? Yes, the same man in two quickly succeeding states. Now (to the eye which seeth in secret) he appears as one whose mind the Father hath enlightened, now as one whose heart Satan has filled and occupied; now the object of praise and blessing, now of censure and pungent rebuke. And does not this changing Peter, with those two opposite sides of his character turned so rapidly to Christ, stand a type and emblem of our weak humanity? of the ductile nature that is in the best of the followers of our Lord? of the quick transitions that so often take place within us? our souls now

shone upon by the light from Heaven, now lit up with fires of another kindling? What lessons of humility and charity do such experiences in the history of the best of men inculcate!

Peter must have been greatly surprised when, shaken off by Jesus, he was spoken to as if he were the arch-fiend himself. Unconscious of anything but kindly feelings to his Master, he would be at a loss at first to know what sinful, satanic element there had been in the sentiments he had been cherishing—the words that he had used. It might at once occur to him that he had been too familiar—had used too much liberty with him whom he had just acknowledged to be the Christ, the Son of the living God. But it could surely not be simply and solely because of his being offended at the freedom taken, that Jesus had spoken to him as he did. Some light may have been thrown upon the matter, even to Peter's apprehension at the time, by our Lord's own explanatory words: "Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men." There were two ways of looking upon those sufferings

and death, of which, now for the first time, Jesus had begun to speak—the selfish, earthly, human one, and the spiritual, the divine. Peter was thinking of them solely under the one aspect, thinking of them in their bearing alone upon the personal comfort, the outward estate and condition, of his Lord. He would have Jesus avoid them. He himself would stand between them and his Master, and not suffer them to come upon him; inflicting, as he imagined they would do, such great discredit and dishonour upon his name and cause. But he knew not, or forgot, that it was for this end that Jesus came into the world, to suffer and die for sinners; that the cup could not pass from him, the cross could not be avoided, without prophecies being left unfulfilled, purposes of God left unaccomplished, the sin of man left unatoned for, the salvation of mankind left unsecured. He knew not, or forgot, that he was bringing to bear upon the humanity of our Lord one of the strongest and subtlest of all the trials to which it was to be exposed, when in prospect of that untold weight of sorrow which was to be laid upon it in the garden and upon

the cross, the instincts of nature taught it to shrink therefrom, to desire and to pray for exemption. It was the quick and tender sense our Lord had of the peculiarity and force of this temptation, rather than his sense of the singularity and depth of Peter's sinfulness, which prompted and pointed his reproof. At the same time he desired to let Peter know that the way of looking at things, in which he had been indulging, had in it that earthly, carnal element which condemned it in his sight. Nay, more; he would seize upon the opportunity now presented, to proclaim once more, as he had so often done, that not in his own case alone, but in the case of all his true and faithful followers, suffering, self-denial, self-sacrifice, must be undergone. He had noticed the approach of a number of the people who had assembled at the sight of Jesus and his apostles passing by their dwellings. These he called to him,[1] as if wishing to intimate that what he had now to say, though springing out of what had occurred, and addressed in the first instance to the twelve, was yet meant for

[1] Mark viii. 34.

all—was to be taken up and repeated, and spread abroad, as addressed to the wide world of mankind. If any man, he said,—whosoever, whatsoever he be—will come after me, be a follower of me, not nominally, but really, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. No other way there was for me, your Redeemer, your forerunner, than by taking up the Cross appointed, and on that Cross bearing your transgressions: and no other way for you to follow me, than by each of you voluntarily and daily taking up that cross which consists in the repudiation of self-indulgence as the principle and spirit of your life, in the willing acceptance of self-denial as the fixed condition of the new life's growth and progress in your souls, in the crucifying of every sinful affection and desire. "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it." Let it be your main, supreme, engrossing object, to save your life; to guard yourself against its ills, to secure its benefits, its wealth, its honours, its enjoyments—the end shall be that the very thing you seek to save you certainly shall lose. But if

from a supreme love to Christ, and a predominating desire to please him, you are willing to lose life, to give up anything which he calls you to give up, the end shall be that the very thing that you were ready to lose, you shall at last and most fully gain. For take it even as a mere matter of profit and loss—but weigh aright what is thrown into the scale, when you are balancing earthly and eternal interests—"What is a man profited if he gain the whole world?" No man ever did so; but suppose he did, imagine that one way or other the very whole, the sum-total that this world,—its pursuits, its possessions, its enjoyments, can do to make one happy, were grasped by one single pair of arms into one single bosom, would it profit him, would he be a gainer if, when the great balance was struck, it should be found—that in gaining the whole world he had lost his own soul? that it had been lost to God and to all its higher duties, and so lost to happiness and lost for ever? For if a man once lose his soul, where shall he find an equivalent in value for it? where shall he find that by which it can be redeemed or bought again; what shall

he find or give in exchange for his soul? Too true, alas! it is, that, clear though this simplest of all questions of profit and loss be, many will not work it out, or apply it to their own case, content to grasp what is nearest, the present, the sensible, the earthly, and to overlook the more remote, the unseen, the spiritual, the eternal. Too true that what hinders many from a hearty and full embrace of Christ and all the blessings of his salvation, is a desire to go with the multitude; a shrinking, through shame, from anything that would separate them from the world. Would that upon the ears of such the solemn words of our Lord might fall with power—"Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels."[1] And at that coming, when the earth and the heavens shall pass away, and we shall find ourselves standing before the great white throne, and in the presence of that vast community of holy beings, what will it look then to have been ashamed of

[1] Luke ix. 26.

Jesus now? What will it be then to find him ashamed of us, disowning us?

How strangely must this about the Son of man so coming with power and great glory, have sounded in the ears of those who had just been listening to him as he told how that he must suffer many things, and be killed and be raised again the third day! Beyond that time of dishonour and suffering and death, predicted as so near, here was another advent of the Son of man, around which every circumstance of glory and honour was to be thrown. But when was that advent to be realized? Of the day and the hour of its coming no man was to know; but this much about it Jesus might even now reveal, that there were some standing then before him who should not taste of death till they saw the Kingdom of God set up, till they saw Jesus coming in his kingdom. It could not be of his personal and final advent to judgment that Jesus meant here to speak, for that was not to occur within the lifetime of any of that generation. Those, besides, who were to be alive and to be witnesses of that advent were never to taste of death.

Jesus could only mean to speak of such a visible institution of his kingdom as should carry with it a prelude and prophecy of the great consummation. As it is now known that of the twelve apostles John and Philip alone survived the great catastrophe of the destruction of Jerusalem, when the Judaic economy which Christ's kingdom was meant to supersede was set aside, it has been generally believed that it was to that particular epoch or event that Jesus here referred. If we reflect, however, that it was to the general audience by whom he was at the time surrounded, and not exclusively to the twelve, that Jesus addressed these words, we may be the more disposed to believe that it was to the general fact of the open establishment of his kingdom upon earth—that kingdom which was erected on the day of Pentecost, and which came forth more conspicuously into notice when the Jewish ceremonial expired, and it took its place—that our Saviour alluded. Some of those to whom Jesus was speaking at Cæsarea-Philippi were to witness the setting up of this kingdom within the souls of men, and in its setting were to behold the

visible pledge that he would come again the second time, to bring the present economy of things to its close.

Let us apply the saying of our Lord in this way to ourselves. He has a kingdom, not distinguished now by any tokens of external splendour — his kingdom within the soul. Before we taste of death we may, we ought, to know that kingdom, to enter into it, be enrolled as its subjects, be partakers of its privileges and blessings. And if so by faith we see and own our Lord, yielding ourselves up to him as the Christ, the Son of the living God, who has come in the name of the Lord to save us, then when we close our eyes in death, we may do so in the humble confidence that when he comes in his own glory, and the glory of the Father, and the glory of the holy angels, we shall not be ashamed before him at his coming, and he shall not be ashamed of us, but shall welcome us into that kingdom which shall never be moved, whose glory and whose blessedness shall be full, unchangeable, eternal.

XVI.

THE TRANSFIGURATION.[1]

SIX days elapsed after our Lord's first foretelling of his approaching death. These days were spent in the region of Cæsarea-Philippi, and appear to have passed without the occurrence of any noticeable event: days, however, they undoubtedly would be of great perplexity and sadness to the disciples. They had so far modified their first beliefs and expectations, that they were ready to cleave to their Master in the midst of prevalent misconception and enmity. But this new and strange announcement that he must go up to Jerusalem, not only to be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, but to be put to death and raised again the third day, has disturbed their faith, and filled their hearts

[1] Matt. xvii. 1-13; Mark ix. 2-13; Luke ix. 28-36.

with sorrowful anxieties—a disturbance and anxiety chiefly, we may believe, experienced by those three of the twelve already admitted by Jesus to more intimate fellowship and confidence. The six days over, bringing no relief, Jesus takes these three "up into a high mountain apart."

Standing upon the height which overlooks Cæsarea-Philippi, I looked around upon the towering ridges which Great Hermon, the Sheikh of the Mountains, as the Arabs call it, projects into the plain. Full of the thought that one of these summits on which I gazed had in all probability witnessed the Transfiguration, I had fixed upon one of them which, from its peculiar position, form, and elevation, might aptly be spoken of as a "high mountain apart," when casting my eye casually down along its sides as they sloped into the valley, the remains of three ancient villages appeared dotting the base. I remembered how instantly on the descent from the mountain Jesus had found himself in the midst of his disciples and of the multitude, and was pleased at observing that the mountain-top I had fixed upon met all the requirements of the

Gospel narrative. If that were, indeed, the mountain-top up to which Jesus went, he never stood so high above the level of the familiar lake, nor did his eye ever sweep so broadly the hills of Galilee. Whichever the mountain was, the shades of evening were falling as Jesus climbed its sides. He loved, we know, the stillness of the night, the solitude of the mountain. He sought them for the purposes of devotion—in the loneliness, the calmness, the elevation, finding something in harmony with prayer. Generally, however, on such occasions he was alone. He either sent his disciples away, or managed to separate himself from their society. Now, however, as anticipating what was about to happen, he takes with him Peter and James and John, the destined witnesses of his humiliation and agony in the garden. The sun sinks in the west beneath the waters of the Great Sea as the top of the mountain is reached. Night begins to draw its mantle round them, wrapping in obscurity the world below. Jesus begins to pray. The three who rest a little space away from him would join in his devotions, but wearied

with the ascent, less capable of resisting the coming-on of night and the pressure of fatigue, their eyes grow heavy till they close in sleep —the last sight they rest on, that sombre figure of their Master; the last sound on their listening ear, the gentle murmur of his ascending prayers. From this sleep they waken, not at the gentle touch of the morning light, not to look down upon the plain below, seen under the beams of the rising day: with stroke of awakening power, a bright, effulgent radiance has fallen upon their eyelids, and as they lift them up, while all is dark below, the mountain-top is crowned with light, and there before them now there are three forms: their Master—"the fashion of his countenance altered"—his face shining as the sun—lit up, not alone, as the face of Moses once was, by the lingering reflection of the outward glory upon which it had gazed, but illumined from within, as if the hidden glory were bursting through the fleshy veil and kindling it into radiance as it passed—his raiment shining, bright as the glistening snow that lay far above them upon the highest top of Hermon—exceeding

white, so as no fuller on earth could whiten them; and beside him, appearing, too, in glory, yet in glory not like his—dimmer and less radiant—their forms, their attitudes, their words all showing that they came to wait on him and do him homage—Moses the Lawgiver, and Elijah the Reformer or Restorer of the Jewish theocracy. Whence came they? In what form did they now appear? How came Peter and James and John at once to recognise them? They came from the world of the dead, the region that departed spirits occupy. Elijah did not need to borrow for this occasion his old human form. He had carried that with him in the chariot of fire—the corruptible then changed into the incorruptible—the mortal having then put on immortality; and now in that transfigured body he stands beside the transfigured form of Jesus. Moses had died, indeed, and was once buried; but no man knew where nor how, nor can any man now tell us in what bodily or material shape it was that he now appeared, nor what there was if anything about the external appearance either of him or of Elijah which helped the apostles

to the recognition. In some way unknown the recognition came. It was given them to know who these two shining strangers were. It was given them to listen to and so far to understand the converse they were holding with Jesus as to know that they were speaking to him about the decease he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. But it was not given to them either immediately or any time thereafter to report, perhaps even to remember, the words they heard. We must remain content with knowing nothing more about that conversation—which, whether we think of the occasion, or the speakers, or the subject-matter, appears to us as the sublimest ever held on earth—than generally what its topic was. But of what great moment even that information is we shall presently have to speak. Their mysterious discourse with Jesus over, Moses and Elias make a movement to retire. Peter will not let them go—will detain them if he can. He might not have broken in upon his Master while engaged in converse with them, but now that they seem about to withdraw, in the fulness of his ecstatic delight, with a strong

wish to detain the strangers, a dim sense that they were in an exposed and shelterless place, and a very vain imagination that the affording of some better protection might perhaps induce them to stay, and that if they did they might all take up their permanent dwelling here together, he cannot but exclaim, "Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles (three arbours or forest tents of the boughs of the neighbouring trees); one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." Not knowing what he said, the words are just passing from his babbling lips, when the eye that follows the retreating figures is filled with another and a brighter light. A cloud comes down upon the mountain-top—a cloud of brightness—a cloud which, unfolding its hidden treasures, pours a radiance down upon the scene that throws even the form of the Redeemer into shadow, and in the darkness of whose excessive light the forms of Moses and Elias sink away and disappear. This cloud is no other than the Shekinah, the symbol of Jehovah's gracious presence. From the midst of its excellent glory, there comes the

voice, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him,"—not Moses, nor Elias, nor any other lawgiver, nor any other prophet,—but hear ye him. As the apostles hear that voice they are sore afraid; the strength goes out of them, and they fall with their faces to the ground. Jesus comes, touches them. The touch restores their strength. He says, "Arise, and be not afraid." They spring up; they look around. The voices have ceased, the forms have vanished, the glory is gone; they are alone with Jesus as at the first.

Such as we have now recited them were the incidents of the Transfiguration. Let us consider now its scope and design. In the shaded history of the man of sorrows, this one passage stands out so unique—a single outburst of light and glory on the long track of darkness—that we look at it with the most intense curiosity; and as we look the questions start to our lips, Why was it that for that one brief season the brow that was to be crowned with thorns was crowned with glory, the countenance that was to be marred and spit upon shone as the sun, the raiment that

was to stripped off and divided among foreign soldiers became so bright and glistering? Why was it that he who ere long was to be seen hanging up to die between the two malefactors, was now and thus to be seen, with Moses and Elias standing by his side paying to him the most profound obeisance? Why did that clouded glory come down and glide across the mountain-top, and that voice of the Infinite Majesty speak forth its awful and authoritative, yet instructive and encouraging words? In answer to these questions, we must say that we know too little of the world of spirits to take it upon us to conjecture or to affirm what it was, so far as they personally were concerned, or the community of which they formed a part, which brought Moses and Elias from their places of abode in the invisible world to stand and talk for this short season with Jesus on the mount. Doubtless the benefit, as the honour, to them was singular and great, involving a closer approach to, a nearer fellowship with, Jesus in his glorified estate, than was ever made or enjoyed by any other of our race on earth, than may be made or enjoyed even by the re-

deemed in heaven. But we venture not to specify or define what the advantage was which was thus conferred. We know too little also of the inner history and of the human mind of the man Christ Jesus, to say how seasonable, how serviceable this brief translation into the society of the upper sanctuary may have been—what treasures of strength and comfort fitting him for the approaching hour and power of darkness, the solemn announcement of his sonship by the Father, the declaration of satisfaction with all his earthly work, may have conveyed into his soul. Doubtless here, too, there were purposes of mercy and grace towards the Redeemer subserved, which it is difficult for us to apprehend, more difficult for us fully to fathom. But there is another region lying far more open to our inspection than either of those now indicated. It is not difficult to perceive how the whole scene of the transfiguration was ordered so as to fortify and confirm the apostles' faith. That it had this as one of its immediate and more prominent objects is evident, from the simple fact that Peter, James, and John were taken up to the mount to witness

it. Not for Christ's own sake alone, nor for the sake of Moses and Elias alone, but for their sake also, was this glimpse of the glorified condition of our Lord afforded; and when we set ourselves deliberately to consider what the obstructions were which then lay in the way of a true faith on their part in Christ, we can discern how singularly fitted, in its time, its mode, and all attendant circumstances, it was to remove these obstructions, and establish them in that faith.

1. It helped them to rise to a true conception of the dignity of the Saviour's person. The humbleness of Christ's birth, his social estate, the whole outward manner and circumstances of his life created then a prejudice against him and his claims to the Messiahship, the force of which it is now difficult to compute: "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" was the question not of a captious scribe or a hostile Pharisee, but of an Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile. "Is not this the carpenter's son?" was the language of those who had been intimate with him from his birth when they heard him in their

synagogue apply the memorable passage in the prophecies of Isaiah to himself—"Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary, and his brothers James and Joses, and Simon and Judas; and his sisters, are they not all with us? And they were offended in him." In the case of his own disciples, his character, his teaching, his miracles, his life fully satisfied them that he was that Prophet who was to be sent. Yet the very familiarity of their daily intercourse with him as a man stood in the way of their rising to the loftier conception of his divinity. Besides, had no such incident as that of the Transfiguration occurred in the Saviour's history, we can well conceive how at this very stage they might have been thrown into a condition of mind and feeling exactly the reverse of that of their countrymen at large. Blinded by pride and prejudice, the Jews generally would not look at those Scriptures which spoke of a suffering, dying Messiah, but fixing their eyes alone upon those glowing descriptions given by their prophets of the majesty of his person and the glory of his reign, they cast aside at once and

indignantly the pretensions of the son of the carpenter. Now, for the first time, the idea of his suffering unto death was presented to the minds of his own disciples. Afterwards they were more fully instructed out of the writings of Moses and the prophets how it behoved Christ to suffer all these things, and then to enter into his glory. But the glory of which so much had been foretold—that bright side of the prophetic picture—what was it, and when and how was it to be revealed? Here again, just when their faith was widened, in one direction, in another it might have begun to falter. To meet all the trials of their position, in mercy to all their weaknesses, one sight was given of the Lord's transfigured form; one visible manifestation of the place he held in the invisible kingdom; one glimpse of the heavenly glory, with Jesus standing in the midst. Sense stretched out its vigorous hand to lay hold of blind and staggering Faith. And long afterwards—thirty years and more from the time that the great manifestation was made—in Peter's person, Faith, when she had got over all her difficulties and stood serene, secure, triumphant,

looked back and owned the debt, and published abroad her obligation, saying, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice we heard when we were with him in the holy mount."

2. The position which Christ assumed towards the Jewish priesthood and the Mosaic ritual was not a little perplexing—his habitual neglect of some, his open and severe condemnation of other religious observances sanctioned by the highest ecclesiastical authorities, regarded generally as of divine origin and authority, and rigorously observed by all who made any pretensions to piety. He wore no phylacteries—he made no long prayers—neither he nor his disciples fasted—he and they ate with unwashed hands—he sat down with publicans and sinners—in many ways, according to the current ideas, he and his disciples broke

the Sabbath—he separated himself from the priesthood—he walked not in their ways—he discountenanced many of their practices—he taught and he practised a religion that made but little of holy rites and outward orderly observances. The religion of the heart, the home, the secret chamber, the broad highway, the solitary mountain-side—a religion that in its heavenward aspects opened a way direct for any sinner of our race to God as his heavenly Father—that in its earthward aspects found its sphere and occupation in the faithful and kindly discharge to all around of the thousand nameless duties of human brotherhood:—such religion the Scribes, the Pharisees, the hierarchy, the whole body of the Jewish priesthood, disliked; they looked askance upon it and upon its author; took up the tale against Jesus—many of them no doubt believing it, and circulated it—that this man was an enemy of Moses, was ill-affected to the Law and to the Prophets, was an innovator, a revolutionist. To see and hear their Master thus arraigned, and with much apparent reason too, as one throwing himself into a hostile attitude towards all the venerated popular superstitions,

must have been not a little trying to our Lord's apostles. But if there entered into their minds a doubt as to the actual inner spiritual harmony between their Master's teaching, and that of Moses and the prophets, the vision of the mount—the sight of Moses and Elias, the founder and the restorer, the two chief representatives of the old covenant, appearing in glory, entering into such fellowship with Jesus, owning him as their Lord, must have cleared it away—satisfying them by an ocular demonstration that their Master came not to destroy the law and the prophets—not to destroy, but to fulfil.

3. The manner of Christ's death was, of itself, a huge stumbling-block in the way of faith—one over which, notwithstanding all that had been done beforehand to prepare them, the apostles at first stumbled and fell. And yet one might have thought that the conversation which Peter, James, and John overheard upon the mount, might have satisfied them that a mysterious interest hung around that death—obscure to the dull eyes of ordinary mortals, but very visible to the eyes of the glorified. It formed the one and only topic

of that sublimest interview that ever took place on earth. And doubtless, when the apostles recovered from the first shock of the Crucifixion, and, under Christ's and the Spirit's teaching, the meaning and object of the great sacrifice for human guilt effected by that death revealed itself, and they began to remember all that the Lord had told them of it, and the seal of silence that had been put upon the lips of Peter, James, and John was broken—when they could not only tell that it was about this decease, and about it alone, that Moses and Elias had spoken to their Lord, but knew now why it was that it formed the only selected topic of discourse—that recalled conversation of the holy mount would contribute to fix their eyes in adoring gratitude upon the Cross, and to open their lips, as they determined to know nothing among their fellow-men but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

4. The peculiar way in which Jesus spake of his relationship to God was another great difficulty in the way of faith. It seemed so strange, so presumptuous, so blasphemous, for a man—with nothing to mark him off as different from

other men—to speak of God as his Father, not in any figurative or metaphorical sense, not as any one, every one of his creatures might do, but in such a sense as obviously to imply oneness of nature, of attributes, of authority, of possession. How, against all the counter forces that came into play against it, was a faith in his true sonship to the Father to be created and sustained? They had his word, his character, his works to build upon. But knowing the frailty of that spirit within which the faith had to be built up, God was pleased to add another evidence, even that of his personal and audible testimony. And so from that cloudy glory which hung for a few moments above the mountain-top, his own living voice was heard authenticating all that Jesus had said, or was to say, of the peculiar relationship to him in which he stood, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye him."

Once before, at the Baptism, had the voice of the Father been heard uttering the same testimony—confirming the same great fact or truth. What more could the Father do than break the silence so long preserved, bow the heavens and

come down, take into his lips one of our human tongues, and in words that men could understand, thus twice and so solemnly declare, that this Jesus of Nazareth—this unique sojourner upon our earth—was no other than his only begotten, his well-beloved Son, to whom, above all others, we were to open our ears, to hear and to believe, to obey and to be blessed? In shape of mere sensible demonstration could faith ask a higher, better proof?

What then may we not say as we contemplate the single but strong help to faith given in this one brilliant passage of our Redeemer's life? What hath God not done to win the faith of the human family in Jesus Christ as his Son our Saviour? If miracles of wonder could have done it; if lights seen on earth that were kindled before the sun, and forms seen on earth that had passed into the heavens, and the very voice heard on earth that spake and it was done, that commanded and all things stood fast, could have done it—it had been done long ago. But, alas! for hearts so slow and hard as ours, we need Christ to be revealed to us by the Spirit, as well as

revealed outwardly by the Father, ere to that great saying of his upon the mount we make the right response, looking upon Jesus and saying, "Truly this is the Son of God—my Lord, my God, my one and only Saviour—with whom I, too, am well pleased, and through whom I humbly trust that the Father will be well pleased with me!"

NOTE.

EXTRACT FROM A JOURNAL KEPT BY THE AUTHOR DURING A VISIT TO THE HOLY LAND IN THE SPRING OF THE YEAR 1863.

Thursday, 23*d April*.—Our first sight of the Sea of Galilee was from the top of Tabor. The next was during our descent this evening to Tiberias from the elevated ground around Kurin-Hattîn. The climate changed sensibly as we descended, and the vegetation altered. We had been under considerable alarm as to the suffocating heat we were to meet with in Tiberias, and the attacks of vermin to which we were to be exposed. Instead of entering the town, or encountering the dreaded enemy in his stronghold, where he musters, we are told, in great force, we pitched our tents in an airy situation on the banks of the lake, where we suffered no annoyance of any kind. Beautiful it was, as the sun went down and the stars shone out, to look upon the waters, and to remember that they were the waters of the Lake of Galilee.

Friday, 24*th*.—A showery night, trying our tents,

which stood out well—but little rain having got entrance. The day cleared up after breakfast, and at eleven o'clock we went on board the boat which we had secured the night before to be at our disposal during our stay here. Rowed along the south-western shores of the lake. The hills that rise here from the shore are lofty, some of them 1200 or 1300 feet high. Landed for a while on a beautiful pebbly beach in a little bay, on the shores of which are scattered the ruins of the ancient Tarichœa. Within the small enclosure of the bay—less than a quarter of a mile across—indenting not more than one hundred yards the general shore-line, Josephus tells us of more than two hundred vessels being gathered for the only naval engagement between the Jews and Romans. What an idea does this present of the former populousness of these now silent and almost boatless waters! Bathed in the lake, and lay on the shore gathering shells. Took boat again, and rowed to the southern end of the lake, where the Jordan leaves it, and, true to its tortuous character, bends right and left as it issues from the lake. Rowed across here, and landed on the eastern shore. We had intended making a minute survey of the south-eastern banks, the general belief having so long been that somewhere upon them was the scene of our Lord's cure of the demoniac of Gadara. A careful inspection of what lay quite open to view at once convinced us that it could not have been at any place on the eastern side of the lake south

of Wady Fik, which lies nearly opposite Tiberias, that the miracle was wrought, for there is no steep place whatever at or near the lake-side down which the swine could have run violently. For a long way inland the country is level—never rising to any such height as would answer to the description in the Gospel narrative. There is a Gadara, indeed, in this neighbourhood, but it is at a great distance from the lake. It would take three hours to reach it, and the gorge of the river Jermak intervenes. It cannot have been the Gadara near to which the tombs were, out of which the inhabitants came immediately on hearing what had happened on the lake side. A single look at Kurbit-es-Sumrah (Hippos) must satisfy every observer that it could not possibly have been there, nor anywhere in its immediate neighbourhood, that the incidents occurred connected with the healing of the demoniac. We rowed back in the evening to our tents, thoroughly satisfied that in this instance the existence of a place called Gadara lying south of the lake had exercised a misleading influence. It remained for us to examine the eastern side of the lake, above the point at which we now left it. This we resolved to do next day. . . .

Saturday, 26th.—Rowed across to Wady Fik, the first place along the eastern shore coming up from the south at which the miracle could have been performed. On landing, we asked our boatmen whether there were any tombs in the wady.

Their answer was to point us to a very old burying-ground, scarcely a hundred yards from the place where we landed, which told its own story by the stones scattered over it. We scarcely needed to ask whether there were any remains of towns or villages near; for, looking to our right, on the slope of a hill about quarter of a mile off, the ruins of a village were to be seen,—a very old village our guide told us it was,—its name, as he pronounced it, Kurban, or Dharban, or Goorban, we could not exactly say which. Immediately fronting us was a lofty conical height, with the steepest line of descent we had yet seen. This height was connected by a narrow shoulder of land with the line of hills behind, which here decline so rapidly to the shore, that either along their sides, or down the still steeper side of the semi-detached and conical eminence in the mouth of the wady, the swine may have run. There is indeed a level space, of no great extent however, between the shore and the bottom of the hills and of this eminence, but it might easily have been that under the impulse of the demoniac possession, and urged by the impetus given in so long and so rapid a descent, the swine might have been hurried across the space into the water. There is, in fact, no steep place along the whole eastern shore which runs sheer down into the water. Here, then, in Wady Fik we had enough to satisfy all the requirements of the narrative: tombs so placed that immediately on Christ's landing a man

might have come out of them; a mountain near, on which two thousand swine might have been feeding; a height down which they might have run so violently as to be driven into the sea; and a village at hand to which the tidings might easily be carried. It remained for us, however, to visit Wady Semakh —the site fixed on by Dr. Thomson as the scene of the event. Here, too, more than one of the conditions required by the narrative were fully met: on the hill-side, to the right of the valley, were caves used formerly as tombs; between us and them, as we stood upon the shore, were the remains of an old village, while away at a considerable distance on our right was a slope of a mountain side that might have served for the descent. The tombs, however, were too far off. Their position relative to the village scarcely corresponded with the narrative, from which one would naturally infer that the village lay behind,—the word needing to be carried to it. On the whole, after the fairest and fullest comparison we could institute, our decision was that it was in Wady Fîk, and not in Wady Semakh, that the incidents of the strange healing occurred.[1]

The closer survey, however, that we were now able to make of Wady Semakh, strengthened the impression that eye and glass had conveyed to us—as from the other side we had studied the eastern shores of the lake—that it was in its neighbourhood that the

[1] See *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 380.

feeding of the five thousand took place. Let any one run his eye from the entrance of the Jordan into the lake, down the eastern shore, and he will notice that all along the land rises with a gentle and gradual slope; never till miles behind rising into anything that could be called a mountain; never showing any single height with a marked distinction from or elevation above the others, so separate and so secluded that it could with propriety be said that Jesus went up to that mountain apart to pray. Wherever Capernaum was, to pass over from it to these slopes on the north-eastern shore traditionally regarded as the scene of the miracle, could scarcely be said to be a crossing over to the other side of the lake. But Wady Semakh presents the very kind of place required by the record of the events. Looking up into it, with high mountains on either side, with lesser valleys dividing them from one another, presenting a choice to any one who sought an elevated privacy on a mountain top for prayer,—and turning our eye upon the many plateaux or nearly level places, carpeted at this season of the year with grass, my companion, Dr. Keith Johnston, and I were both persuaded that our eyes were resting on the neighbourhood where the great and gracious display of the Divine power was made in the feeding of the multitude.

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